

2013 Golden Jubilee edition

BIHAR YOGA®

Bihar School of Yoga

The Vision of a Sage

From the teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati
and Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Bihar School of Yoga



1963–2013
GOLDEN JUBILEE

WORLD YOGA CONVENTION 2013
GANGA DARSHAN, MUNGER, BIHAR, INDIA
23rd–27th October 2013

Bihar School of Yoga

The Vision of a Sage

*From the teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati
and Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

© Bihar School of Yoga 2013

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted or stored in a retrieval system, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from Yoga Publications Trust.

The terms Satyananda Yoga® and Bihar Yoga® are registered trademarks owned by International Yoga Fellowship Movement (IYFM). The use of the same in this book is with permission and should not in any way be taken as affecting the validity of the marks.

Published by Yoga Publications Trust
First edition 2013

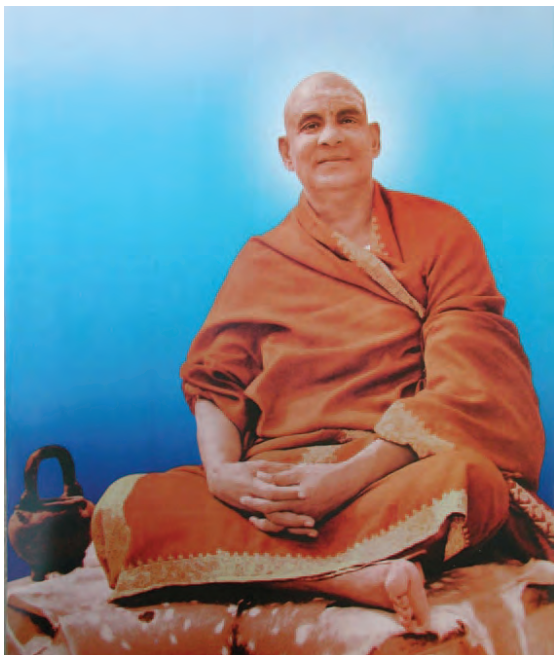
Compiled by: Swami Nirmalratna Saraswati

ISBN: 978-93-81620-97-7

Publisher and distributor: Yoga Publications Trust, Ganga Darshan,
Munger, Bihar, India.

Website: www.biharyoga.net
www.rikhiapeeth.net

Printed at Thomson Press (India) Limited, New Delhi, 110001



Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*

Contents

Part 1: The Unfolding Vision

- | | |
|------------------------|----|
| 1. Birth of a Saint | 7 |
| 2. The Mendicant Years | 23 |

Part 2: Bihar School of Yoga

- | | |
|---------------------------|----|
| 3. Bihar School of Yoga | 43 |
| 4. Expanding the Horizons | 62 |
| 5. Beginning of a New Era | 76 |

Part 3: The Vision of a Sage

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| 6. What is Yoga? | 93 |
| 7. The Yogic Renaissance has Begun | 114 |
| 8. Insights on Yoga | 124 |
| 9. The Classical Yogas | 135 |
| 10. The Ultimate Yoga | 172 |

Part 4: The Journey Continues

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| 11. Yoga for the Twenty-First Century | 179 |
| 12. Manas Putra | 200 |

To Swami Sivananda, who is the maker of my life and destiny. He who was the humblest of the humble, kindest of the kind, warmest of the warm, greatest among the great, and whose effulgence is permeating and kindling the hearts of millions around the world.

—*Swami Satyananda*

Introduction

The year 2013 marks fifty years of existence of the Bihar School of Yoga, an institution that has inspired millions of people to live a healthy, fulfilling and harmonious life. Established by Swami Satyananda Saraswati in 1963, it is one of greatest yoga institutes the world has known. While fulfilling the mandate of his guru, Swami Sivananda, to 'spread yoga from door to door and shore to shore', Swami Satyananda has given humanity a vision of yoga so expansive, so profound and so complete that it seems it can never be surpassed. It is truly the vision of a yogic seer.

In early 2013, the first program to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the institute was held during the auspicious period of Basant Panchami, commemorating the foundation day of the institute. During the satsangs given on the occasion, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati, successor to Swami Satyananda, stirred many hearts when he told stories of the development of the Bihar School of Yoga, and of its founder. As preparations for the grand finale of the celebrations – the World Yoga Convention to be held in October 2013 – commenced in the subsequent months, three pertinent questions were often asked: *'What is the story behind the Bihar School of Yoga?'* *'What was Sri Swamiji's vision of yoga?'* *'What is yoga?'* While the answer to these questions can cover volumes, this book attempts to provide a quick glimpse of the whole panorama and tells, in brief, how Swami

Satyananda propagated yoga through the establishment of the Bihar School of Yoga.

Celebrating Swami Satyananda's life

From its inception in 1963, the Bihar School of Yoga (BSY) has remained true to the vision of Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda, and yet it moves with the times and the needs of the day as a dynamic, evolving, creative force. Its inspiration is chronicled through four parts.

Part 1: The book starts with the story of the birth of Swami Satyananda, the yogi-saint destined to establish the Bihar School of Yoga. In *The Unfolding Vision*, Sri Swamiji's early years are described: his auspicious birth, his spiritual awakenings, his search for a guru, his initial meeting with Swami Sivananda, and his life in Rishikesh ashram where he served his guru for twelve dedicated years with a force, enthusiasm and zeal similar to the rising kundalini itself.

Sri Swamiji came to his guru as a nineteen-year-old with a yearning and aspiration for spiritual life. On first meeting his guru, he was told, "The light is within you. Work hard. Involve yourself fully in karma yoga and the light will shine forth." Sri Swamiji served in his guru's ashram in Rishikesh from 1943 to 1956 with utmost devotion, and through his commitment and spirit of selfless service to guru, gained an enlightened understanding of the secrets of spiritual life.

Sri Swamiji's story continues with some anecdotes from his eight years as a wandering mendicant, where he lived amongst the people, understanding their needs and performing his own sadhana. This period of sannyasa life crystallized the vision that would enable him to fulfil his guru's mandate.

Part 2: Equipped with a clear vision, Sri Swamiji embarked on the next period of his life: the development of the Bihar School of Yoga. *Bihar School of Yoga* describes how the original BSY came into existence, and the subsequent expansion and relocation to Ganga Darshan. This section reveals the magnitude of the spiritual force harnessed and infused into every undertaking of Sri Swamiji. It also brings

to light the unfaltering dedication and one-pointedness with which Sri Swamiji set out to fulfil his guru's mandate within the twenty years allocated to him. We then hear about the extraordinary humility with which Sri Swamiji closed this chapter of his life, walking away to embrace the next. This period of transition was enabled by his spiritual successor, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati, who received the reins from Sri Swamiji and led the Bihar School of Yoga and its affiliated organizations into previously unexplored territory, taking the institution to new heights.

Part Three: The Vision of a Sage comprises a collection of sayings taken from the inspiring teachings of Sri Swamiji from the 1960s onwards. They answer the last two questions posed during Basant Panchami and, at the same time, reveal the genius of a visionary saint and the unstoppable force that continues to guide the development of BSY.

Sri Swamiji elaborated every possible meaning and perspective of yoga. He presented a wealth of techniques that covered every level of interest from beginners to advanced practitioners. He reached out and touched people from all walks of life and revealed a wealth of insight in relation to the purpose, necessity and the practices of yoga, relevant to the present times. The section gives a comprehensive description of what yoga is, and highlights Sri Swamiji's vision of yoga that encompasses various aims and purposes, an expansive view that goes far beyond the practices of asana and pranayama.

With a treasure of yogic knowledge and practical experience, Sri Swamiji created the Bihar School of Yoga and contributed his vision of yoga to the spiritual evolution of humanity, thereby becoming established as the foremost inspirer of yoga in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The sayings also illustrate Sri Swamiji's perception of the gradual resurgence of yoga over the decades, from 1960 until the culmination of his mission in 1988, a renaissance in which he was a key instigator.

Sri Swamiji's personal insights and revelations regarding the evolutionary change that yoga offers humankind are

highlighted through sayings that depict the foresight he had about the needs of individuals, groups and society in general.

The force of his guru's mandate, combined with his own intellectual brilliance and spiritual perception, enabled him to give precise and systematic explanations on the practical and theoretical aspects of classical yoga. Sri Swamiji has clearly defined and systematized all the components of asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha, hatha yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga, karma yoga, japa yoga, kundalini yoga, kriya yoga, laya yoga, mantra yoga, nada yoga, swara yoga, and more. A brief glimpse into the branches of classical yoga that Sri Swamiji elucidated over the years of his yoga mission is also given.

Lastly, the section presents a satsang from Sri Swamiji's days after he had renounced the institution, in which he describes the ultimate yoga, the yoga that is most relevant and appropriate for a true aspirant.

The journey continues

The concluding section of the book brings us to the present day and to the illuminating and inspiring teachings of Sri Swamiji's spiritual successor, Swami Niranjanananda. In this section, Swami Niranjanananda offers a detailed and comprehensive picture of the vision of yoga, as given by the original rishis and sages of yoga, and as developed by BSY. This vision encompasses yoga philosophy, yoga psychology, applied yoga and yoga ecology. This is the same vision of a yogic culture that Sri Swamiji predicted for humankind; the dream of a new world order that breaks down the barriers of cast and creed, where the divine life can be experienced by every individual. The final chapter of the book describes Swami Niranjan's own journey, indicating the path ahead.

By telling this story, this book aspires to be a small tribute to our beloved gurus, Sri Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjanananda, whose magnanimous spirits have inspired and lit the flame of yoga within countless hearts.

Part 1

The Unfolding Vision

1

Birth of a Saint

I was born in 1923, and I left my hearth and home in 1943, twenty years later. I established the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963, twenty years after that. I will stop working for the mission in 1983, and then by 2003, my purpose of living on this material plane will be over. That is all.

I think that this is the right type of introduction. It is not necessary to tell people how many books I have written, how many ashrams I have opened, how many times I have been around the world like a satellite, and how many disciples I have. It is also not necessary to tell how enlightened I am. Only Milton can understand Milton, and only Shakespeare can understand Shakespeare. Only if you are Satyananda, can you understand Satyananda.

—Swami Satyananda

From time to time, great men have appeared on this planet. Sacrificing their own pleasure and happiness, they have toiled for the welfare of the world and encouraged others to do the same. Their teachings are not mere words; they are outer expressions of the inner experiences they themselves had on the path.

Swami Satyananda Saraswati was one such being. He did not merely acquire siddhis and spend his life in samadhi in the forest. He is one of those rare yogis who utilized his shakti for the welfare and benefit of all humanity. He

acquired a thorough experiential knowledge of each and every stage of spiritual life, thus becoming an authoritative and inspiring guide on the spiritual path, whose heart brimmed over with the desire to unite every soul with other souls and the cosmic spirit. He became guru to millions of devotees and disciples in India and the world.

Through the Bihar School of Yoga, millions of people have been served in the path of self-discovery. Without Sri Swamiji, this great institution would have never come into existence. It flew on the wings of one man's incredible destiny, which was apparent the very moment he was born in 1923.

Auspicious beginnings

It was a particularly unstable time in history, as nations were being ravaged by political strife and the bane of modern, industrial warfare. However, auspicious notes punctuated Sri Swamiji's entrance into the world, as if to herald the coming of hope for humankind. He was born at the stroke of midnight on the night of the full moon in the month of Margashirsha, the same night claimed by Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* as his very own. There, in the Himalayan mountain village of Almora, in the hushed silence of a midwinter's snowfall, all was at peace. The wheels of destiny turned and an eventful journey began. His parents called him Devendra, king of the gods.

Sri Swamiji was an exceptionally intelligent and intuitive child, and his deep spiritual samskaras began to reveal their presence early on. From the age of six, he was prone to unusual experiences, wherein he would lose body consciousness and seemingly float above his surroundings, observing the world with a detached and impartial eye. His child's mind could not express or analyze these expanded states of consciousness and his parents had no means of understanding them either. They sought expert advice, and it would be the world's great fortune that there was little in the way of medical or psychiatric treatment in the immediate

surroundings. They relied instead on the words of sages, sannnyasins and holy men who travelled through the region on pilgrimage to nearby sacred lands. They examined him and determined that there was nothing at all wrong with him. On the contrary, they proclaimed that he was blessed with a rare and powerful spirit, and they prophesied that one day he would be a sannnyasin of the highest calibre. They advised his parents to expose Sri Swamiji to spiritual influences, and said that he would naturally find his way in life.

Venture into mysticism

Such was Sri Swamiji's nature that he was ever curious to discover the mysteries of the unknown, higher reality. The stream of sadhus that travelled through his village deeply inspired him, and he took a keen interest in meditation early on. Growing up in the pristine environs of the Himalayan mountains, with crisp, clean air, sparkling rivers and waterfalls, thick forests, delicate flowers and wild fauna, he became particularly sensitive and receptive to nature's invisible forces.

Sri Swamiji's first tantric experience began in his teenage years. At that time, he came across a book of tantra. Together with a neighbourhood friend, he studied the book thoroughly and they decided to try the techniques for themselves. They began, and after a few days decided to visit a nearby cremation ground at night to continue their tantric sadhana. Sri Swamiji's father was a member of the Arya Samaj, a reformist group interested in re-establishing vedic customs in their purity, without the additional rituals which had been added over time. When he got word of their experimentation, he immediately put a stop to the whole play.

Determined to continue with the sadhana, the two friends came up with another plan. At night, when everyone was asleep, they climbed on to the rooftop of Sri Swamiji's home, placed the human ashes on the terrace and set to task. After they left, the house began to rattle and shake with such a force that the entire family woke up in terror. When

his father found out what was going on, all hell broke loose. Eventually the ashes were thrown away and peace restored.

Spiritual journey begins

Around this time, Sri Swamiji encountered a tantric yogini from Nepal. Sukhman Giri was illiterate, foul-mouthed and physically grotesque, yet possessed an intimate understanding of the various stages of enlightenment. She spoke with authority on many of the esoteric yoga practices and Sri Swamiji was drawn to her. He had read the works of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Dayananda and longed to have the experience of the higher consciousness for himself. Sensing that she had the power to lead him to expanded states of awareness, he asked her to teach him everything she knew. She agreed, and over a period of six months, he received practical instruction in every aspect of *vama marga*, the left-hand path of tantra, which led him to have astounding experiences.

Throughout this period, his outward behaviour remained normal and he carried out all his external duties, including going to school, taking examinations and participating in the school routines. Inwardly, however, through shaktipat, he was having transcendental experiences that took him beyond the body and the mind, into cosmic dimensions where, as he later described, “Even the sun and moon ceased to exist.”

One day, Sukhman Giri told him that she was leaving. Although he asked her for initiation, she recognized that he had strong samskaras for spiritual life and sannyasa. She told him that what he had experienced was due to her energy; however, to become established in the higher states of consciousness, he needed to find a guru who would guide him in the proper manner.

Vision of a new world order

After this life-changing experience, ‘normal life’ became meaningless. Radical, progressive thoughts and ideas preoccupied his mind, which he shared with his elder sister,

who he was very close to. Sri Swamiji had been educated in Christian schools and had the opportunity to study both western and ancient Indian religious teachings. Endowed with a brilliant intellect, he mastered several languages easily and wrote moving essays on the ancient scriptures, many of which he read in their original Sanskrit. He had always been enormously compassionate towards the suffering of others, and he and his sister began to dream up a new world order that shattered the barriers of cast and creed. In his vision, temples had no doors because God belonged to everybody. He became increasingly disinterested in worldly life and began contemplating sannyasa.

Search for guru

When he left his home in 1942 to look for his guru, he did not know where to go. At that time, he remembered that a close acquaintance in Rajasthan, in western India, whom he considered a sister, was the disciple of a guru and was practising sadhana under his guidance. He visited her and she directed him to her guru. This man was eighty-five years old and was a master of tantra and hatha yoga. He was impressed that Sri Swamiji knew the practical sadhanas of tantra and the idea sparked in his mind that perhaps Sri Swamiji was the one fit to be the successor and heir to his establishment. However, even though he was a very good person, well informed, gentle, pure and sincere, Sri Swamiji knew he was not the guru who would guide him in spiritual life. After about nine months, having learnt many theoretical aspects of yoga and tantra, he decided to leave.

Sri Swamiji left in the evening in total darkness and, after some time, reached a place in Uttar Pradesh called Bareilly. While he was in the third-class waiting room at the railway station, a conversation sparked up with an old man sitting near him who asked him where he was going. Sri Swamiji replied that he was in search of a guru, and the old man advised him to go to Rishikesh, the place of holy men. During the days that followed, he felt as if he was in a daze.

When he became aware of the surroundings once again, he found himself on a train approaching Rishikesh, and in the same compartment was a sannyasin with matted locks. The sannyasin was smoking, and Sri Swamiji asked him for a cigarette. A conversation ensued and, realizing that Sri Swamiji had nowhere to stay, the sannyasin took him to a place in Rishikesh and then continued on his own way. A man from Sri Swamiji's district happened to find out that he had arrived and enquired about his aspirations. Upon hearing his story, the man sent him to a great swami in Rishikesh whose name was Vishnudevananda, and it was he who finally directed Sri Swamiji to Swami Sivananda Saraswati.

Meeting Swami Sivananda

One of the greatest saints of the twentieth century, Swami Sivananda had arrived in Rishikesh twenty years earlier and had undergone severe austerities to find perfection in yoga. In light of his outstanding spiritual successes, a flock of seekers had grown around him. Coincidentally, it was in the year of Sri Swamiji's birth that Swami Sivananda had set out for his spiritual search. He was a mountain of a man, with a gentle and child-like manner, and a heart that poured forth pure, unconditional love. Sri Swamiji had never been compelled to bow down before anyone, not even his own father, yet he had to only step into Swami Sivananda's vibrant energy field to know that he had found the one he was looking for, to whom, in the course of time, he would surrender his entire life. In his own words, Swami Satyananda's first encounter with Swami Sivananda was thus:

I arrived at my guru's ashram in the early morning on 19th March 1943. The place was so powerful and everything there was so spiritually charged that my mind completely ceased to function. I experienced total tranquillity, and the intellectual analysis, which I used to do all the time, 'Who is this guru? Is he my guru? How can he be my guru? Is he realized?' stopped, as though my intellect was completely gone. The

power of analysis and so-called enquiry ceased. I did not think that he was my guru, nor did I think that he was not my guru. The positive and negative aspects completely ceased. That was even before I saw him.

I went down to a very dilapidated kutir where Swamiji was seated. I don't know if I prostrated or greeted him; I only remember that he said,

"What do you want?"

I said, "I want to stay here and live with you."

"What for?" was his question.

I said, "In order to transcend the mental state which I have arrived at."

He said, "Okay, you stay here and serve everybody."

From that moment, he became my guru. I didn't say to him, "You are my guru." He didn't say to me, "You are my disciple." Nevertheless, that bond was formed and I stayed with Swami Sivananda.

With that meeting, Sri Swamiji's search for a guru was over and Swami Sivananda gave him the name Satyam, which means truth, reality, the unchanging principle and the qualities of sincerity and purity. Satyam had sought a guru to learn the deeper practices of meditation; however, Swami Sivananda told him, "Work hard and you will be purified. You don't have to search for the light; the light is within you."

A versatile genius

I had only one mission: to serve my guru. And that service opened the doors to my spiritual fortune.

—Swami Satyananda

At that time, Satyam did not yet realize the profundity of guru seva, yet, with complete faith in his guru, he plunged himself into selfless service. He gave everything to the work, every bit of his energy, every part of his mind. His anger and joy, his acceptance and frustration, his love and hatred, his talents and brilliance, his idiosyncrasies, his passions and

weaknesses, these all became offerings, which he placed at the feet of his guru. Guru seva became his passion, his joy and pleasure. He lost all of sense of space and time, working ceaselessly, not for a day or two, but for years at a time.

At all hours of the day and night, he engaged himself in activity. He was extremely capable, excellent and efficient in whatever he put his mind to, and regularly did the work of four or five people. Swami Sivananda called him a 'versatile genius', as there was virtually nothing Satyam could not do: he constructed buildings; worked in the kitchen, cooking food and scrubbing pots and pans; gave messages, typed documents and did secretarial work; cleaned toilets and washed laundry; performed poojas and spent sleepless nights chanting during akhanda kirtan. He even helped dig an enormous irrigation line through the mountainside to provide the ashram with a direct source of water.

Satyam's extraordinary intellect was penetrating, razor-sharp and receptive. He possessed the ability to develop a deep understanding of any subject simply by introduction to the most basic theories and ideas. Before coming to the ashram, he had spent some time studying medical science, and under Swami Sivananda's guidance, himself a physician, he learned how to prepare medicines and care for the sick and infirm who visited the ashram dispensary. He single-handedly ran the printing press, a job that normally took two or three men to manage. Owing to his photographic memory, he was able to transcribe Swami Sivananda's lectures without the aid of a tape recorder. He could listen to hours of lectures at a time, sit at the typewriter, and produce verbatim everything he had heard. Upon reading the transcripts, Swami Sivananda always gave his stamp of approval.

Satyam had mastered several languages in school, including English and Sanskrit, which he read and spoke as if they were his mother tongue. He was also a talented writer and, in his teens, published poetry. This made him an invaluable asset in the editing department, and he became responsible for translating and editing all of Swami

Sivananda's books from English to Hindi. He also possessed a deep knowledge of the ancient scriptures, and Swami Sivananda frequently consulted him on delicate matters related to interpreting and translating sacred texts.

Overcoming limitations

Pain is a crucible into which nature throws a man whenever she wants to mould him into a sublime superman.

—Swami Sivananda

Before coming to Rishikesh, Satyam had lived a life of comfort and privilege. His family were wealthy land-owners and he had never known poverty and hunger, or experienced inconvenience and discomfort. He was accustomed to a non-vegetarian diet, the cool mountain air and the freedom to do whatever he chose, whenever he chose. In the ashram, his life changed and he faced countless difficulties and hardships.

During those years, the Sivananda ashram was still in its developmental stages. There were no facilities for the residents: no washrooms, toilets, beds, blankets, mosquito nets and no proper place to sleep or eat. One had to climb thirty feet down steep mountain slopes to fetch a single bucket of water from the Ganga. Climbing back up without spilling the precious load was an even greater challenge. Food was scarce and always strictly vegetarian. Many times Sri Swamiji had to beg for his meals, walking for miles through scorpion and snake-infested jungles for two plain rotis. There were days at a time when he went without proper food or rest, and his body weight dropped dramatically and he was reduced to bones. From time to time, he suffered serious injuries and fell dangerously ill from snakebites, typhoid, malaria, dysentery, hepatitis and pneumonia.

At other times, his ego took the blow. Accustomed to giving orders, in the ashram he found himself being told what to do, how to do it and when to do it, often by people he would have normally considered to be beneath him. Formerly

a master, he now did the work of a servant. Many times Swami Sivananda, ever watchful of his disciples' behaviour, would instruct someone to verbally insult and abuse Satyam, just to see how he would react. Other times, he would send a party of mischief-makers to try to lure him into misbehaving. These were all tests, many of which Satyam would undergo repeatedly, exhausting his karmas. In Sri Swamiji's own words:

All the good opinions that I had about myself were completely thwarted. I had thought I was a calm man, but I realized that I was angry. I had thought I was a pure man, but I realized that I was impure. I had thought I was a strong man, but I realized that I was weak. I had thought that I was a moderate man because I had been brought up in a good family and had plenty to eat, but I realized how greedy I was when I saw someone drinking tea that I did not get.

A veritable Nachiketa

As Satyam faced and conquered these countless difficulties, his mind became peaceful and calm, and he came to see the daily trials of ashram life as a means to his salvation. He became so clear on this point that he swore that even if someone had placed before him an object of comfort during those times, he would have kicked it away, lest it distract him from his goal. Such was his incredible resolve that Swami Sivananda declared Satyam to be a veritable Nachiketa, rich with the qualities of *viveka* and *vairagya*, the two qualities of discrimination and dispassion essential for spiritual life.

Throughout this period, though he endured every imaginable test of his mind, body and emotions, his faith in his guru never waned. In fact, when everything else seemed to be falling apart, the trust and love he had for Swami Sivananda only grew stronger, and in the midst of these ordeals, he felt the grace of his guru being generously showered upon him. Even at the most difficult and life-threatening moments he would think, 'If I die, it doesn't matter. I'll die at the feet of my guru.'

Later, he would speak of the totality of his experience in Rishikesh as a kind of heaven, a period when he was blissfully free of cares or worries. He lived the ideals of seva as set out by the scriptures, serving his guru with pure devotion and higher awareness. He had no preconceived notions or conditions and no expectation of recognition or return for his work. With complete sincerity and focused effort, the process of transformation and purification took place, and he experienced the purging of many karmas and samskaras. Gradually, the barrier that stood between him and higher states of consciousness began to dissolve, taking him beyond the limitations of an ordinary man.

On Swami Sivananda

Of his guru, Satyam said: “Many times I read about Christ. I never believed such a man could live at all. Compassion, love and consideration for others are difficult things to find. They are not intellectual things; they are born out of the human self. Swami Sivananda could see the whole community as part of his own self. He had no attachments, yet he loved everybody. He was large-hearted yet he was disciplined, and his life was a constant sacrifice.

While living with Swami Sivananda, Satyam claimed that their temperaments were diametrically opposed; he felt that his guru was like the humble, holy cow that was calm and serene, whereas he himself was like a ferocious Alsatian dog. Swami Sivananda’s teachings to him and his gurubhais were simple and direct. He would say, “Do not be disturbed and don’t disturb.” Satyam never saw him fretting and frowning. He never saw him worried or over-jubilant. He never heard him criticizing anyone and never saw him refuse anything to anyone. While living in the presence of his guru, Satyam saw that only those who have realized their Self completely can be compassionate. With intuitive vision, Swami Sivananda told him that his time would come in 1983, at which time his mind would become cosmic.”

Test of faith

In 1946, just three years after he arrived in Rishikesh, Satyam's faith was challenged. The many books and leaflets distributed by the Divine Life Society were printed in Lahore, which was then still a part of India. Swami Sivananda sent Satyam there to oversee the printing of several new publications, a mission that would take several months to complete. Satyam became so engrossed in his work that he hardly noticed the great strife that India was undergoing in its struggle for national identity. Plans for partition of the country were underway in 1946, yet he did not find out about it until May or June of 1947. At the time of the Independence in August, he suddenly found himself in Pakistan, on the wrong side of a newly-created border. He immediately wrote to his guru requesting to return to the ashram, but the letter never reached Rishikesh.

The horrors he witnessed, the shocking massacres and slaughter of thousands of innocent men, women and children turned his world upside down. Watching the devastation wrought by sheer hatred and greed, his outlook on life took a complete turn. On the fourth day, a military helicopter arrived to bring Satyam back to Rishikesh, sent after much insistence by Swami Sivananda.

Disillusioned by this experience and unable to settle, he decided to leave the ashram. Without informing anyone in the ashram, he wrote to a former schoolmate who was then the managing editor of the *Daily Tribune* in Delhi. He explained his plan to leave the ashram and enquired about securing a post as a reporter. His friend immediately sent a cash advance of four hundred rupees and an appointment letter as subeditor to the newspaper. Satyam had a new set of clothes tailored, refreshed his knowledge of politics and current affairs, and prepared to leave. The illusion of the mind, *maya*, was playing a trick on him and at that time, he was completely taken over by the spell.

On 8th September, while Satyam's mind was on his imminent departure, celebrations were under way for Swami

Sivananda's diamond jubilee birthday. Devotees and disciples from around the world came to participate. Satyam remained aloof throughout the festivities, even though he had been informed that he was to be initiated into sannyasa. The following day, Swami Sivananda called him to his kutir and made enquiries. Standing before his guru, Satyam explained his plan to leave the ashram, declaring that he no longer felt that sannyasa and religion were necessary for God-realization. Swami Sivananda did not argue. He only said that Satyam should stay for the duration of the birthday celebrations, which would continue until the 12th. Satyam stayed on, but he avoided the crowds and prepared his mind to leave.

On the morning of the 11th, Swami Sivananda again called Satyam to his kutir and told him with absolute certainty that he would not be leaving the following day, instead, he would be taking sannyasa. The force of his guru's conviction rendered him powerless:

That was a bolt from the blue. I was shocked, but I couldn't do anything. He was more powerful than I in every respect. He just closed my mind again. He said sternly and with conviction, "You have things to do and you are not meant for that life. Your destiny is sannyasa and self-realization is not your problem. You have a duty to perform and you are serving here as part of your training. I want you to become a sannyasin."

The day passed into afternoon and evening, and Satyam remained motionless, his entire being stilled by the morning's encounter. The next morning, he found himself walking back to Swami Sivananda's kutir. Ready with the scissors, Swami Sivananda cut the tuft of hair from the back of Satyam's head, removed his sacred thread, handed him a geru dhoti and said, "Your name will be Swami Satyananda Saraswati from today. Do not discard this dress, even if your skin has to be peeled off."

With that, the initiation was complete. In the presence of all the acharyas and sannyasins, a havan followed with all

the formal rites and rituals. From that day, the doubt that had weighed so heavily in his heart and mind vanished. He remained in the ashram, without question on the purpose of his life.

To live as a sannyasin

Swami Satyananda was initiated into paramahansa sannyasa, an order reserved for only the most extraordinary sannyasins. Paramahansa is a golden swan, said to be so discriminating that it can extract pure milk from water; that is, reality from unreality. Satyananda, though only twenty-five years old, had proved himself worthy of such a title, yet Swami Sivananda warned him that he would have to work hard for many years before he would actually rise to the level of a paramahansa. In Sri Swamiji's words:

Swami Sivananda told me, "First, you will have to exhaust your karmas and your ambitions and desires which represent human nature. This is necessary before you can establish yourself in the experience of expanded consciousness. When you know that you have exhausted everything, that you have fulfilled everything, then you will leave society and establish yourself in the paramahansa state."

Satyam asked whether he could complete the business of exhausting his karmas while living a normal life in society. To this, Swami Sivananda explained that in society, any efforts made become unavoidably self-oriented and to accomplish his life's great mission it was necessary for Satyananda to live as a sannyasin and dedicate himself to God and guru.

Swami Satyananda remained with Swami Sivananda for a total of twelve years. During that time, he grew into a remarkably patient, intuitive and thoughtful sannyasin with a quiet yet powerful magnetism that captured everybody's attention. He won the hearts of all his gurubhais who, years later, remembered his dedication and devotion with the greatest fondness. In 1953, a young couple came to Rishikesh with the desire to be initiated by Swami Sivananda,

only to be told quite mysteriously they were destined to be disciples to another guru. Years later, they were surprised and delighted when it was Swami Satyananda, the gentle, radiant sannyasin who had caught their attention during the visit, who initiated them into spiritual life.

Vision at Rameshwaram

In 1954, Swami Sivananda conducted an All-India tour, taking with him a handful of his most promising disciples. Satyananda was among them, and his primary role was to ensure that the automobiles they used were always in top working order. He found himself so consumed with his duty that no other thoughts would enter his mind. Nonetheless, when his guru instructed him, without warning, to deliver a lecture in Sanskrit to a group of scholars, he spoke so eloquently that the audience responded with deafening applause.

At the conclusion of the All-India tour, Swami Sivananda and the team of sannyasins visited the temple at Rameshwaram. When Satyam bowed before the Shivalingam, he experienced a vision of an area with buildings beside a river on a hillock, and he had the deep feeling that the vision was somehow related to him, although he could not understand it. Eventually the experience left his mind. Much later, in 1982, when Ganga Darshan was being constructed and the design was finalized, it suddenly flashed before him that he had seen that site, the building, the hillock and the river, in his vision at Rameshwaram. Ganga Darshan is the manifestation of that vision.

Onwards to discover destiny

In 1956, Swami Sivananda called Swami Satyananda to his kutir one last time and told him that it was time for him to leave the ashram. Since his initiation, Sri Swamiji had never again thought of leaving the ashram, and his guru's words now came as a surprise. Swami Sivananda explained that he needed to leave in order to realize his true potential, and that if he remained in the ashram he would become a

bonsai, dwarfed by his surroundings. He was to abandon all his ashram duties, all his karma yoga and wander the land to experience the world not as a guru or a saint, but a humble aspirant. He was given the mandate to go ‘from door to door and shore to shore’ spreading yoga throughout the world so that it would become a universally accepted science.

At this point, Swami Satyananda, who in the future would become a world-renowned authority on yoga, knew nothing at all about yoga. In all his years in the ashram, he had never attended a single class or lecture on the subject, likening the postures he saw others doing to acrobatics. Thinking of himself as a man of intellect and reason, he instead studied Advaita Vedanta, the philosophy of non-dualism. He had explored and delved into the deepest philosophical texts, the Upanishads and Vedas. He could speak at length on the commentaries of Shankara and Ramanuja.

When he told his guru that he knew no yoga, Swami Sivananda simply replied that he would pick it up, and so it happened. Swami Sivananda called him into his room and initiated him into the ancient tantric practice of kriya yoga. This is not the kriya yoga known throughout the world today, but a unique process taking place between a guru and his chosen disciple. It is *shaktipat*, a transmission of energy much like the transferring of data from one computer hard drive to another. Swami Satyananda received his guru’s energy as a computer receives a transfer of information. His own ‘hard drive’ was completely overwritten by Swami Sivananda’s, and in less than ten minutes, guru and disciple had become one. Afterwards, Swami Satyananda remarked, “Swamiji, I already know it. I only needed this reminder.”

That day, when he touched the feet of his guru in humble gratitude, at once the words flashed in his mind, ‘Find a mission for yourself.’ On 19th March 1956, exactly twelve years after he had first come to Rishikesh, he left the ashram to discover his destiny. As he was walking away, Swami Sivananda pointed to him and said, “See there, that man without shoes, with love in his heart? He is my true successor.”

2

The Mendicant Years

To develop a higher vision, it is customary in India for sannyasins to live for some time as *parivrajakas*, wandering mendicants. This parivrajaka period can last between seven and twelve years. It is a time of moving from place to place, wandering and observing the world, without depending on the guru or one's gurubhais. The sannyasin experiences and encounters several different cultures and customs, behaviours and beliefs. Time is spent with many people from all walks of life, whether beggars, kings, thieves, merchants, householders, industrial workers, government officials, and so on. By learning to identify with everyone, one gains an enlightened understanding of oneself and the world one lives in.

This process is essential to recondition the mind and restructure one's own ideals. At the end of parivrajaka life, the sannyasin stops moving about and remains in one place, allowing time to reflect on the experience and for a vision or an aim to emerge regarding one's future work.

Life as a wandering mendicant

Sri Swamiji lived with Swami Sivananda for twelve years, every day learning how to remain unshaken by insult, injury, pain, hardship, craving and pleasure. After twelve years, his guru told him, "Your sadhana is almost complete. So far, you have been learning the divine life here in the ashram with

your spiritual brothers; you have been testing yourself. Now live in the world and see how you fare.”

When Sri Swamiji left the ashram in 1956, he had no plans, and no money – except for the 108 rupees Swami Sivananda had given him, which to this day rest in a box in Ganga Darshan. But the guru’s blessings were with him and people were invariably drawn to him, eager to hear him and help him. At this time he wrote to the couple who would become the pillars of his mission:

Which village or town or city to travel to next, I do not know. All I know is that I have to travel. Wherever I am directed I shall proceed. I have neither planned nor pondered over this matter nor shall I ever do so in the future.

I have set forth with the blessings of revered Gurudev. Where I will go, when I will go, I know not. I have no fixed programs. They are arranged wherever and whenever convenient.

This chapter of wandering was an important period which consolidated Sri Swamiji’s perception of the conditions in which people existed; he acquired a deep understanding of human nature and began to comprehend the emptiness and lack in their lives. The learning wasn’t always easy though.

Perfecting the divine life

Once, Sri Swamiji went to visit an associate, a local police officer, at Raigarh in Madhya Pradesh. Unfortunately, the man was out of town and would not return for some time. Hungry, penniless and with nowhere to stay, Sri Swamiji started walking. He tried to ask for alms, but people shunned him. He walked several miles to Lakshmipur, where he came across a monastery. A Belgian priest was living there and he invited Sri Swamiji in, fed him coffee and biscuits, and even offered him a Cuban cigar. They talked for a long time about the Catholic Church, its many saints, and the history of Christianity in general. The priest was thrilled to have a guest so well versed in Christianity. At the end of their conversation,

he suggested to Sri Swamiji that he visit a place called Jaspur, where a fellow priest would look after him. Sri Swamiji agreed and the priest gave him a letter of introduction to take with him. Sri Swamiji lived in Jaspur for some time, and then left to move ahead with his life and mission.

After Jaspur, Sri Swamiji spent some time in Varanasi, living peacefully amongst the beggars. He followed their routine and every day in the early morning he would squat at the Dashashwamedha Ghat with a cloth spread out on his lap to receive alms. If he collected even five rupees a day, it was enough to enjoy a cup of chai and a meal of puri-kachauri, and meet his simple needs. He felt free to practise his sadhana and wander about the city of gods, spending time as he wished in the company of other sadhus. A cloth spread along the veranda of a temple floor was his bed, the star-filled sky his nightlight and Mother Ganga all the company he needed. Sri Swamiji says that these were days of absolute bliss.

For eight years, he moved throughout India from village to village, city to city, state to state. Sometimes people would criticize him and say, "Look how this young man is wasting his time." Often he went without food, living on alms. Sometimes when he asked for alms from educated householders, he would be insulted and told to move on. One time he boarded a train, a good friend having purchased a ticket for him in an air-conditioned compartment, and some sophisticated man said, "Look here Swamiji, this is air-conditioned!" as though Sri Swamiji did not have a right to the same luxury that he himself did.

At these times, Sri Swamiji would analyze himself to see how the knocks of life were affecting his inner state of mind and, with each year, he tried to perfect the divine life within himself. At the most difficult times, he recalled the words of his guru:

A sadhaka's life must be of such nobility and so fulfilling that the onslaughts, tremors and shocks of life, from family members and friends, from enemies, well-wishers and ill-wishers just do not affect him.

Meeting spiritual luminaries

Swami Sivananda encouraged his disciples to seek the blessings of all the world's spiritual luminaries, knowing that they each had something to offer the sincere seeker. During Sri Swamiji's parivrajaka years, he met many of India's living saints, sages and mahatmas who, like his guru, through the simplicity of their lives, showed the many spiritual paths that lead to the same universal truths.

Some of the more eccentric sadhus did not give darshan easily. Often their outward demeanour was so unapproachable that it was difficult to appreciate their divine nature. Dhuni Wale Dada was one such sage, so called for the continuous *dhuni*, or sadhana fire, he maintained for many years with perfect devotion. This fire absolutely consumed his devotion and he wanted nothing to do with people. Nevertheless, people drew to him like moths to a flame. Whenever someone approached him, he would start shouting verbal abuses and obscenities belligerently to keep them away. His efforts only served to attract more people, and thus his peace was regularly interrupted.

Baba Nityananda of Vajreshwari, the revered guru of Paramahansa Muktananda, was another such sadhu. He loved small children but despised adults. Any time someone would approach him he would throw stones and shout, as if he were raving mad, "They've come to eat my rotis!" Of course, he was not mad, but as a great siddha he had to guard his psychic powers.

Sri Swamiji also went to Ramana Maharshi, whom he describes as the only person he ever met who was completely without desire. His state of desirelessness reflected a powerful state of mind and Sri Swamiji had many opportunities to witness it. Whenever he was in the South, he would travel by foot to the ashram in Tiruvannamalai and visit Ramana Maharishi. He would simply sit and be in the saint's presence. Such visits would often be the catalyst for an inner experience and awakening.

Another saint who inspired Sri Swamiji was Sri Aurobindo, whose vision of a superconscious society greatly impressed him. Sri Swamiji found his ashram in Pondicherry to be a marvellous haven and yogic environment for spiritual development. Not only was the ashram a peaceful centre for meditation and yoga, it was also a dynamic community with activities for children and adults that nurtured personal growth and met the needs of the community as a whole.

Mandate to spread yoga

I left the ashram and from 1956 to 1963 wandered throughout India and the whole Asian subcontinent on foot, by bullock cart, by car, by train, by plane. I lived amongst the people and experienced their joys as well as their suffering.

—Swami Satyananda

The challenges and adventures during Sri Swamiji's parivrajaka years deepened his understanding of the universal needs of people. Like Swami Vivekananda in the century before him, he had set out on a great mission, the meaning of which became clearer to him during his wanderings. He travelled through India, Burma, Pakistan, Nepal, across the Indian subcontinent. Sri Swamiji met people from every age and social class: business owners and labourers, farmers and merchants, artists and teachers, beggars and kings. He lived in tiny villages with people who slept on dirt floors and toiled daily for their survival. He lived in cities with middle class householders who competed to keep up with their status. He stayed in mansions of immensely rich people who had never had to struggle, yet worried about their wealth, health, image and power. Mixing freely with people from all walks of life, he shared their experiences, heard their stories, felt their joys and their sorrows. Through his experiences, he recognized the basic makeup of humanity as the same, rich or poor, young and old. Always, he asked himself, 'What is it that I can offer them?' And the answer was yoga.

Equipped with his guru's mandate to spread yoga, Sri Swamiji began to study the practical and theoretical aspects of yoga. In a remarkably short time, he took in the full scope of yoga practices, their theories and the scriptures that support them, using his own body, breath and mind as a laboratory for his research. Not interested in mere fact-finding, he gathered first-hand knowledge so that he could answer any question about yoga that may be asked, a colossal feat to achieve in one lifetime considering the limitless breadth and depth of yoga.

Sri Swamiji's focus became not the 'holiness' of man, but man's basic 'humanness' which, if expressed to its fullest potential through yoga, was by its inherent nature, divine. His own accomplishments in yoga were so thorough that he had a clear understanding of how yoga could meet people's needs. He developed an approach to yoga that was simple enough for everyone to practise, yet allowed progression to higher stages when an individual was ready. He understood that yoga was the ideal culture for humanity, and a masterful, universal science that allowed one to fulfil one's true potential.

Wherever Sri Swamiji went, he encountered people who were interested in yoga, and so he taught them a few simple practices. Changes took place in the people almost immediately: their physical health improved, their minds became more peaceful, and they were less troubled by life's circumstances, able to face the situations of life with greater harmony, resilience and strength.

Traditional yoga for the modern world

Sri Swamiji did not create a new kind of yoga; he was one of the few yoga teachers of his time who adhered to the authentic, classical and traditional practices as originally taught. However, with his progressive vision, he adapted many different yogic systems and rendered them easy to follow and practise. By way of the clear, accessible systematization of practice and theory, the veil of mystery

that shrouded yoga was removed, giving it a legitimate place within the contemporary context.

Sri Swamiji's days of anonymity did not last long. His company and teachings became much sought after. Every place that Sri Swamiji went, he was adored by the people, who wanted him to stay with them for greater periods of time, enchanted by the radiant and joyful aura that he exuded, lightening their hearts and spirits. Informal one-on-one yoga lessons soon gave way to group classes and, in the course of time, hundreds attended his seminars. People flocked to him in increasing numbers, drawn by the hope of a more peaceful existence and seeking relief from physical pain, mental and emotional stress. Some suffered chronic ailments and came to Sri Swamiji as their last hope. Spiritual seekers came too.

He offered yoga to all of them. He personally started conducting free yoga camps, aided by a growing number of supporters who felt connected to Sri Swamiji and his mission. He taught in private homes, in temples and community centres. He taught anywhere he could and was increasingly booked to full capacity. Some people came to hear his inspiring satsangs and others for his heart-stirring bhajans. There was something so powerful and potent about his presence that he drew the most unexpected visitors. Everyone who encountered Sri Swamiji was aware that he was not an ordinary person, and that he was not simply giving yoga classes. Many followers repeatedly asked for spiritual initiation, but he always refused, saying that he was not interested in 'gurudom'. However, this was not his choice to make, and destiny had already begun to deliver him as a great spiritual luminary.

Photos of Sri Swamiji from this period show a gradual but marked change in his appearance. He had always possessed an attractive, appealing quality, but now he became unreservedly handsome, striking and radiant. He took on an almost god-like appearance and aura; his skin glowed as if he had been washed in gold and his fathomless

eyes shone with a luminosity that was beyond this world. He continually wore a subtle, almost imperceptible grin, like the Buddha lost in contentment. This evolution of his outer appearance would continue over the years, as his inner light and illumination, which Swami Sivananda had seen, began to shine forth visibly.

Chariot of satya and dharma

A pious, devoted couple, Satyabrat and Basanti Srivastava, had earlier gone to Rishikesh to have darshan of Swami Sivananda. The year was 1953. After returning home, they maintained a correspondence with the ashram. A few years later, when Sri Swamiji set out in the world, they received a letter from Swami Sivananda stating that they should invite Swami Satyananda, who had become a parivrajaka, to their hometown of Rajnandgaon. They immediately complied and soon found themselves welcoming the young sannyasin they had noticed by Swami Sivananda's side on their visit to Rishikesh, to their home. Over the following years, the two became the most faithful supporters of Sri Swamiji's mission, arranging yoga programs, hosting satsangs and establishing a yoga community in Rajnandgaon. Whenever he was in need of rest from his increasingly busy travel schedule, he stayed with them. Basanti, who eventually became Swami Dharmashakti, Swami Satyananda's first disciple, tended to his needs with the attentive love of an adoring mother. "My chariot will run on the wheels of satya and dharma," he said at this time.

In 1957, when Sri Swamiji went on a pilgrimage to Gangotri, he took Basanti and Satyabrat with him. It was a great honour for them to join him on this pilgrimage. During that trip, heavy with a feeling that something vital was missing in their lives, the devoted couple quietly asked Sri Swamiji to give them 'something.' He immediately understood their request. He knew without a doubt that Basanti was not fated for motherhood, as confirmed by medical doctors; however, she could bear a child who would



Rishikesh, 1957



Serving the guru, 1940s



Rishikesh, 1950



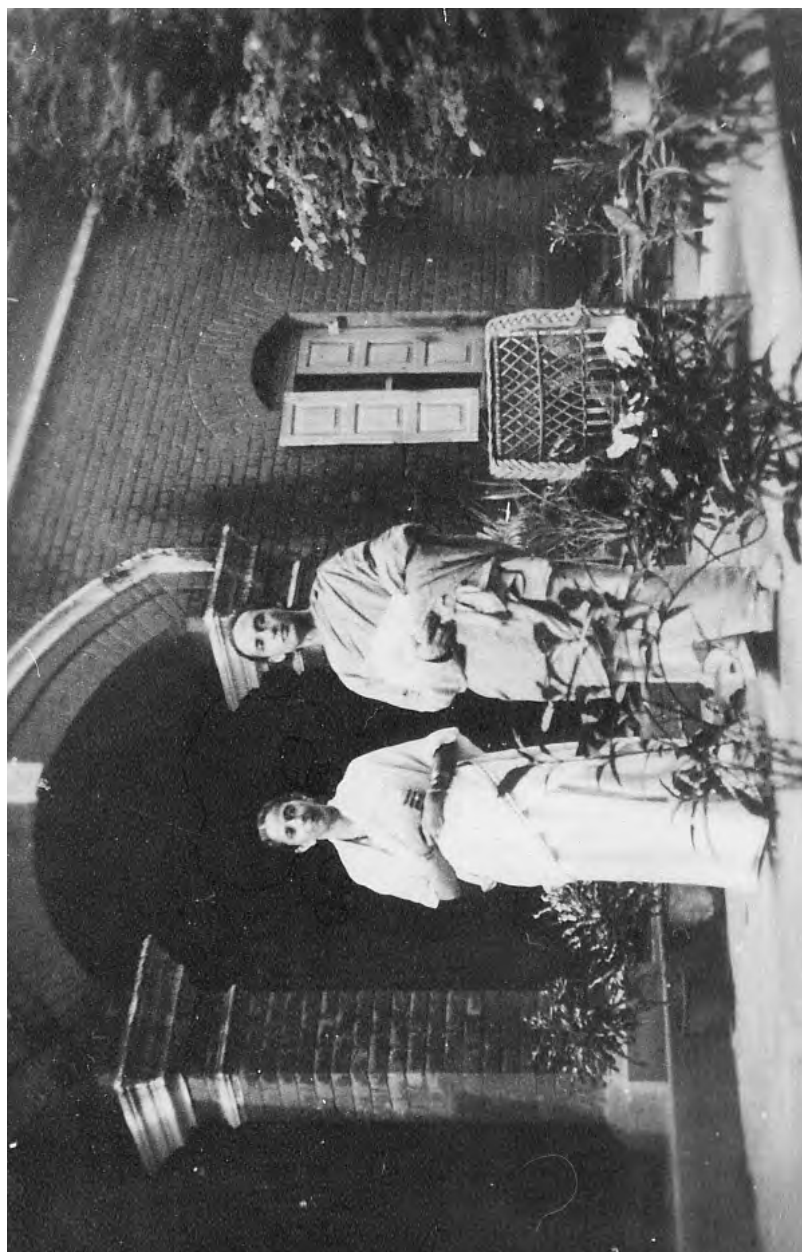
Rishikesh, 1950s



Rishikesh, 1950s



Gangotri, 1950s



Parivrajaka life, 1956



Mumbai, 1963

help him fulfil his destiny. He consented, saying, “I will give you something, but you will have to return it.” They gave their solemn promise to do so. Then, taking some Ganga water in his hands, Sri Swamiji sprinkled it on the couple and made a silent sankalpa, calling on a great soul to enter into the world.

On 14th February 1960, Dharmashakti gave birth to a boy. Swami Satyananda named him Niranjan, pure and untainted, for he was conceived out of the purest intentions. Holding him on his lap for the first time, he declared that Niranjan was born to fulfil a great and noble purpose.

The force of destiny was driving Sri Swamiji and he watched on as his life unfolded before him. He was now solely dedicated to the propagation of yoga and worked with the same energetic zeal as his days of guru seva in Rishikesh. He was constantly at work, travelling, teaching and giving lectures on yoga and spiritual life. He wrote and published pamphlets on yoga practices and philosophy, consulting with scientists, researchers and other spiritual leaders, developing a comprehensive, progressive vision of yoga and spiritual life. He began to develop plans for a global yoga family dedicated to the lifestyle and spirit of yoga.

Early experiences in Munger

When the opportunity presented itself, he would retreat to a quiet place to rest and recharge, finding respite between his public activities. He was increasingly drawn to the small town of Munger, in the north-eastern state of Bihar, a region steeped in spiritual history. Previously, the state of Bihar had hosted Maharishi Valmiki’s ashram, the place where the epic *Ramayana* was composed. Lord Buddha, Lord Krishna and Lord Mahavira, too, graced the soil of this region in times past. Residing within Bihar, surrounded by the sacred Ganga, Munger is the place where Sage Mudgal performed his sacred austerities, and it was also a resting place for Lord Rama.

When Sri Swamiji visited Munger, he had many visions, intuitions and revelations related to yoga, some of which

indicated that Munger was destined to become the centre of his yoga mission and the yogic renaissance. These were vivid experiences, not dreams, and he was certain that he had not hypnotized himself, stating they were all 'so clear and so tangible, so fresh and so true. Not hazy but true experiences; as true as you can say anything is true.' These experiences during his earliest days in Munger produced a challenge to his intellect. As a result, his consciousness and appreciation of human evolution expanded beyond its previous depths:

Earlier in my life, before I became a sannyasin, or even after I had become a sannyasin, a part of my life was not only intellect, it was purely intellectual. I had gone to the point where I doubted the existence of God. It was that period when I studied the communist philosophies. I had read a lot of communist books and the commentaries also. I also read Samkhya and that impressed me very much, because in Samkhya there is no reference to God. I liked the philosophy of Kapila, Samkhya, very much. And in those days, I also read the Tripitakas, the collection of the teachings of Lord Buddha. All these things came to my mind and I had become a confirmed atheist. And it had even been very hard for me to accept anyone as my guru until I met Swami Sivananda.

Even today, I am the intellectual terror, but when I lived in Rishikesh, it was very difficult for all my gurubhais. I would to say to them, "Why do you go to temples? Why do you touch the feet of people and idols? Why do you say prayers like that?" However, later, when I came to the point of experiences, like those I had on that hillock in Munger, and those of my guru appearing before me after his mahasamadhi, my whole mind changed. I began to see the whole thing in the context of man's total awareness, not in the context of my limited awareness. You see, a guru, a teacher, or even a mother, has to see things not in their context. They have to see things in the full context.

If I am thinking that things are only happening externally, I am not aware that things are happening within me. It is so difficult to believe when you see a different reality in front of you, or a separate reality in front of you, that it is an experience coming from within you.

There is a stage of mind, there is a stage of experience, and there is a state of perception when your inner experience and the external perception are both the same, not different. You can see your guru in front of you in flesh and in blood, knowing that he has come from the higher plane. How can I say it is subjective and not objective?

Vision at Karna Chaura

In Munger, Sri Swamiji was particularly drawn to a hillock where Ganga Darshan now stands. That hillock, known as Karna Chaura, had strong vibrations and Sri Swamiji had several inner experiences when he spent time there. Speaking of them once, he likened them to Arjuna's experience of the cosmic form of Krishna, an experience so intense that it was frightening. He said, "Of course, I knew such experiences came from within; nevertheless, they seemed to be very real, as if they were happening in front of me." Despite these experiences, and partly because of them, he was drawn back to Munger.

During the daytime, and sometimes in the evening, he would go to the hillock and sit on an ancient platform believed to have been constructed by King Karna of Mahabharata fame. Of that time, he says, "I would just sit there sometimes and sing, or just lie down and look at the sky, breathe fresh air, or just sleep, with nothing on my mind." The only company he had were the fifty or sixty rickshaw wallahs who went there to drink and enjoy themselves. Sri Swamiji said that they never bothered him and they did not care about his presence either. In fact, they would say, "Babaji has come, it is all right."

Sri Swamiji describes a particularly powerful experience when he felt that the whole earth was shaking beneath him.

The platform cracked and a figure dressed in white flowing robes appeared before him and said, “You stay here. Yoga is the culture of tomorrow.” Later, Sri Swamiji remarked:

From this platform, the generous King Karna distributed his wealth in gold to his subjects. In the near future, I will distribute my wealth, the science of yoga, to all who desire it. That is the reason why, in 1968, I asked the owner of this property for this piece of land. He would not agree at that time, but ten years later, we obtained it.

Devotees in Munger

At a later time, Sri Swamiji went to Munger for *chaturmas*, the four-month period of sadhana during monsoon, and was offered a beautiful kutir, Golkothi, on the Goenka property at Ananda Bhavan (now Paduka Darshan Ashram). Sri Kedar Nath Goenka was a well-to-do citizen of Munger and a prominent industrialist in Kolkata. One of his sons, Krishna Kant Goenka, was particularly devoted to Sri Swamiji and ensured that the sadhana was not interrupted in any way.

During *chaturmas*, *sannyasins* live in one place for four months, study the sacred texts and perform sadhana. In this four-month period, they do not shave their beard or their head, go wandering or give lecture tours. During the *chaturmas*, Sri Swamiji ate only once a day and practised many hatha yoga kriyas, which he never had time to do in Rishikesh. The dedicated service he received from the Goenka family during this time of secluded sadhana impressed Sri Swamiji tremendously. He knew that he had been blessed by the support of these devotees and that they would play a significant role in his future mission.

In 2007, Sri Swamiji praised the Goenka family, “The Goenka family will be remembered as the patrons of a great cause, like Maharana Pratap, who is remembered in Indian history even today. They have been with me right from the very beginning when the Bihar School of Yoga was born. And they are still with me.”

International Yoga Fellowship Movement (IYFM)

During his mendicant years, Sri Swamiji was constantly travelling, teaching, giving satsangs on yoga and spiritual life, and meeting with people to consolidate his vision of a global yoga family. In this manner, he gradually strengthened the foundations of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement, which was formed in 1956 and became an organized movement by 1961.

Sri Swamiji's initial vision was to create a fraternity of yoga experts and practitioners who could assist him in spreading the message of yoga by providing spiritual, yogic, physical and social support to people from every section of society. From its humble beginnings in Rajnandgaon in 1956, the IYFM did much to further his work and there were branches established throughout India, with membership growing steadily every year. Sri Swamiji envisioned IYFM unfolding in five different directions, forming a complete umbrella that covered every aspect of the community's needs.

The first area was the training of qualified teachers and instructors, who could faithfully pass on the yogic teachings to the masses. He conducted the training during small retreats in private homes. Later, with the establishment of the ashram, Sri Swamiji offered detailed and long-term training for teachers in a setting that allowed them to experience the benefits of a supportive yogic environment.

The second area of activity of IYFM was dissemination of yogic knowledge through the distribution of publications and texts. Leaflets and pamphlets on yoga were published from the very beginning. The first book, *Lessons on Yoga, Part I*, was published in 1960. In 1963, with the assistance of his first disciples, Basanti and Satyabrat, he began the printing of the *Yoga* and *Yoga Vidya* magazines in the city of Rajnandgaon. Sri Swamiji understood the power of the printed word to attract people to a cause, and he saw the magazines as a means of reaching out to untapped areas of the community. The articles would include text compiled from his teachings, as well as reports from sannyasins and

specialists on yoga's wide-ranging scope of applications. For years, Basanti and Satyabrat managed the task of running both magazines from their tiny home in Rajnandgaon. Their faithful dedication to the cause during those humble beginnings guaranteed that the magazines have a strong and supportive readership to this day.

In honour of his guru's impassioned care of the sick and needy, the third area of endeavour for IYFM was the establishment of yoga health clinics. This program started in earnest when the Bihar School of Yoga was created, where Sri Swamiji was able to set aside a small area of the ashram specifically for this use. He envisioned a unique treatment centre, where patients could come and receive free treatment and advice from a medical professional who was also a practising yogi. His unique clinic would provide care that was nurturing and supportive and did not rely on excess equipment and drugs. The aim was to offer simple, non-invasive care that could safely treat the most common diseases and promote a healthier lifestyle.

Sri Swamiji had begun to collect books and texts on yoga and modern sciences, philosophy and world religions, and before he even opened the doors of the school, he had a sizeable research library that provided the groundwork for the fourth activity of IYFM, the establishment of a centre for yogic research. Of the necessity of this library, he made the following statement:

For the advancement of any science, research is of primary importance. We shall have to establish a central library with thousands of books on yoga in various languages because, at present, literature on yoga lies scattered. Students can do research under our guidance and go back to their universities with a thesis on yoga. They will receive all encouragement and facilities.

The final aspect of IYFM's work was to take yoga into schools and colleges throughout India. He envisioned that by influencing the lives of children and young people with a

positive, practical approach to yoga in their daily lives, the society's wellbeing and happiness would be enhanced.

The vision Sri Swamiji had for the IYFM was long-term and far-reaching. With the rise in yoga's popularity worldwide, the need for an organization such as IYFM became even more apparent, and when the Bihar School of Yoga was established, it allowed for a much greater expansion of the organization's aim and mission.

Guru's grace

In 1923 you were born; in 1943 you came to me. In 1963, you'll start working for yourself. In 1983, your institution will come to a close, and after that you will work for the cosmos.

—Swami Sivananda

Swami Sivananda had spoken these words to Sri Swamiji on the day he initiated him into sannyasa, clearly mapping out the course of his future. The vision at Karna Chaura had given greater weight to this prophecy, though by 1963 he still did not have a clear plan as to how he would proceed in this work. Then, on 14th July 1963, during another visit to Munger, he had the following vision:

I was in Munger and I had an inner awakening. I had a dream as if something was happening inside, but it was as real as if it were happening physically in front of me. I was in Rishikesh, on the banks of the Ganga River. In that dream, I saw Swami Sivanandaji travelling in a steamer from the Sivananda Ashram to Swarga Ashram on the other side of the Ganga. From the steamer, conches and bugles were being blown, bells were ringing and drums were being beaten.

Swami Sivananda was seated on a chair looking towards Swarga Ashram. He was the only passenger. I was now witnessing the whole thing from the bank in front of the Darshan Maha Vidyalaya which is a little above Sivananda Ashram. For a split second, he turned towards me, and looked, I think at the left side. The moment he glanced at me,

the flywheel on the steamer splashed a little Ganga water on me and my awakening came to an end.

I got up and for some time, I don't know for how long, it was very difficult for me to know whether I was in Rishikesh and dreaming Munger. For some time, I thought I was in Rishikesh seeing Swami Sivananda travelling, and suddenly I started dreaming of Munger. The experience of this consciousness became almost intolerable. Then gradually, I controlled myself and thought and thought and thought. Then I came to know that my external world was Munger. Immediately I understood that Swamiji had left his body and that I had been anointed, I had been appointed.

That was the month of July. I left Munger and went to Delhi, and from Delhi, I went to Rishikesh and found my dream was correct. Swami Sivananda had taken mahasamadhi on 14th July.

The second experience was a visit from Swami Sivananda, reminding Sri Swamiji to fulfil the mandate he had been given:

In August 1963, I returned to Munger from Rishikesh after attending Swami Sivananda's mahasamadhi ceremony. Until then, there was nothing in my mind about establishing a yoga ashram. One night while I was asleep at Ananda Bhavan, I found that my room was open and the tall figure of Swamiji came there in flesh and blood. There was no doubt about it. Of course, by then I was wide awake, and Swamiji began to speak to me in Tamil, not in English.

I knew this was not Swamiji's physical form. I knew that he was dead, that he was no more on this earthly plane. I saw him as a higher reality. He said, "What program have you decided upon for yourself?" I told him, "Swamiji, I have no program at all." He said, "Why don't you light a lamp and carry on the work according to the plan we made in 1956?" There might have been something in my subconscious mind, but consciously I had only one mission, to keep on roaming,

to eat whatever little I could get twice a day and to sleep properly. I would say to myself, 'Do not mind anybody. This world is the tail of a dog, it is incorrigible, and things go on. I do not have anything to do with this.' That was how I used to think, but now I said, "Yes, if that is your wish, I will do it." The second thing he said was, "You do not have to take charge of Rishikesh Ashram. No, you need not go to Rishikesh; you will remain here." That is part of the reason why the yoga renaissance began in Munger.

It was after this experience that I remembered something my guru said to me during my years in Rishikesh. In Rishikesh, he used to talk a lot about yoga. Then I would type his articles and translate them into Hindi. When he wrote about which yogasana cures what disease, I would ask, "What is the proof?" I knew my guru had been a medical doctor and he used to say that unless evidence is given in black and white that yoga can cure or alleviate certain diseases, nobody would accept it. Ordinary people might accept it, but the scientists and intellectuals would not. He understood this, because he was a doctor himself. Nevertheless, I still demanded proof. For years I continued relating to him in this way, so finally he said, "None of my disciples speak like this, and I agree with you. You want to establish yoga as a science, so do it! Give yoga a scientific base, scientific credibility." That was all he said.

Sri Swamiji knew that his guru's grace was upon him, and that it was time to work on a new vision for the propagation of yoga. He remained the humble servant of his guru and without wavering, set about fulfilling his guru's mandate. The seed for the establishment of the Bihar School of Yoga had been sown.

Part 2

Bihar School of Yoga

3

Bihar School of Yoga

In 1963, when the International Yoga Fellowship Movement became clear in my vision, I felt that the historical hour was chiming. It was at that moment that an idea came upon me that different people of different races could be brought together by the unifying spirit of yoga, and that the great contribution of this science could become more beneficial.

—Swami Satyananda

Sri Swamiji's thoughts began to focus on setting up a small institution to formulate and propagate a system of yoga relevant for the needs of humankind, thus moving towards manifesting his vision. Around the same time, he met many research scholars and scientists. He encouraged them to conduct research and to find out everything about the yogic practices. The vision of the school became apparent and he adopted the slogan, 'Yoga is the culture of tomorrow'.

The day after Swami Sivananda's materialization to remind him of his mandate, Sri Swamiji went to Bhagalpur. About an hour's drive from Munger, Bhagalpur is on the bank of the Ganga and a major railway junction that connects Bihar to the rest of India. After leaving Rishikesh, Sri Swamiji had often visited Bhagalpur and stayed at Shiv Bhavan with a resourceful and well-established family, the Sahais. From morning until night, they would sing kirtan and have satsang. They enjoyed his company immensely and

requested him to remain there. Nonetheless, during this visit he ruled out the idea.

Having decided that Munger was to be his base, he returned there. Sri K.K. Goenka received him at Jamalpur and, on the way to Munger, he asked Sri Swamiji about his plans. Sri Swamiji replied that he had no plans, but that it was time to stay in one place. Sri Goenka further asked about him staying in Munger. Sri Swamiji replied that if he were to get a place, he would remain there with the purpose of fulfilling his guru's mandate.

Sri Goenka offered him Ananda Bhavan; however, Sri Swamiji sought a simple hut for himself where he could house the lamp, as instructed by Swami Sivananda, and materialize the vision to fulfil the mandate his guru had given. They offered him a small property immediately beside the railway line in Munger. Sri Swamiji accepted it and named it Sivanandashram, in tribute to his guru. Shortly afterwards, Sri Swamiji left for Mumbai. Of this visit, he says, "I left empty-handed and I returned with trunks of things: vessels, plates, bedding, pillows, blankets, files and a few thousand rupees as well."

Pledge at Tryambakeshwar

From Mumbai, Sri Swamiji visited Tryambakeshwar, near Nasik in Maharashtra, where the Godavari River emerges. His ishta devata, Lord Mrityunjaya, the conqueror of death, is housed there in a temple.

Bowing before his deity, Sri Swamiji asked for his assistance for the next twenty years to come. Despite the strides he had made, he felt that he hadn't made sufficient progress, and to ensure that he would successfully fulfil the mission his guru had given to him, he requested divine intervention from his ishta. He had promised his guru that he would establish yoga and give it scientific credibility throughout the world, and he had only twenty years. As Swami Sivananda had told him, this phase of his life would culminate in 1983.

He surrendered to his ishta, saying, “Lord, I will work with whatever inspiration or help you give me for twenty years. After that, I will leave everything and come to you. Just twenty years.” Today, to say that Lord Mrityunjaya fulfilled his request would be an understatement.

Inauguration of the Bihar School of Yoga

When Sri Swamiji returned to Munger in January 1964, a grand hall was ready, as Sri Goenka had taken a great interest in the work. On 19th January 1964, the auspicious day of Basant Panchami and Saraswati Pooja, the Bihar School of Yoga (BSY) was inaugurated and the akhanda jyoti lit, in memory of Swami Sivananda and as a symbol of the luminous tradition and the radiant potential of yoga.

From that moment on, and for the next twenty years, every action, thought and deed of Sri Swamiji would be wholly devoted to the work given to him by his guru. He made a pledge to not travel out of Munger for three years, to establish himself in his new role and to set the groundwork for his global yoga mission. In the December 1963 issue of *Yoga* magazine, he made a formal declaration:

Blessed Self,

Om Namah Shivaya

On the eve of my entering into the holy order of Paramahansa on the auspicious day of Basant Panchami, the 19th January 1964, I thank all my disciples, devotees and admirers for their kind help and cooperation accorded to me during my parivrajaka life, enabling me in the propagation of spiritual and yogic knowledge from door to door and place to place all over India.

Henceforth I shall not be able to move about, but will be ever prepared to help all those who seek my advice and guidance through correspondence or personal instructions at the Bihar School of Yoga, which is going to be started in Munger through the kind patronage of Sri Kedar Nath Goenka . . .

On this very date, in memory of my Guru, His Holiness Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who attained mahasamadhi on 14th July 1963, an akhanda deepak will be kept burning for all times to come, as a token of my deep regards and gratitude for Guruji, from whom I was able to learn all the practical aspects of yoga. I am sure you will all continue your kind help and support as before for the widespread dissemination of this ancient science of yoga all over the world in a modern and scientific way.

Lastly, I pray to God Almighty to shower upon you His blessings, for peace, prosperity and kaivalya. May you all lead a yogic life and attain God-realization.

*In prayers,
Swami Satyananda
Munger, Bihar*

Unshakeable faith and focus

Adiguru Shankaracharya came to restore the age-old vedic culture. Time has eroded that tradition. Today, again, yogic culture must be revived and reinstated. My dream is to fulfil this great task. It is for you to come to my aid with body, mind and resources. You may fail but the world will not, as the dream has to be realized. My mission has to be accomplished. Yoga is going to be the culture of humanity and no power on earth can make it retrace its steps. In coming times, yoga will direct the events of world history. It is up to you to accept this great science with love, admiration, hope and sincerity.

—Swami Satyananda

The original Bihar School of Yoga was located beside the railway tracks about a half a mile from the sacred Ganga. It could have easily been overlooked by anyone passing by, and in those days, few outsiders visited the remote town of Munger. At that time, there were no more than five or six sadhakas and sannyasins living in the ashram, and

the only resources they possessed were their faith, strong determination and the vision of their guru to guide them. Yet in no time, BSY proved to be a mighty force that drew the interest, appreciation and praise from serious seekers within India and all over the world. Sri Swamiji's faith and focus were so unshakeable that there was no question of failure. With this small group, he immediately started to personally conduct residential courses and seminars on yoga as a science, a sadhana and a lifestyle. The success of those early days surprised even him:

. . . I do not know what has happened! Not a day do I get rest; not a day can I think of anything other than yoga. I had built a small cottage costing a few thousand rupees to see if the people would come or not. I thought I should maybe not waste my time and effort. I thought if I get a good catch, then I know people will come. In the beginning, I would have fifteen-day courses in which I was the teacher, the cook, the administrator and the guru. I also established a yoga research library and became the librarian.

My plan was correct, as I really understood human psychology. Almost immediately, I had hundreds of students. People came and slept on the lawn if they did not have a place in the yoga hall. They came from any distance, at any cost, with any inconvenience. They knew that the yoga I had to offer was for their benefit. Many times, I declared my school closed for one month but I would get the maximum number of students when I did this. I then knew beyond doubt that yoga spreads like fire. Ashram workers also came at that time, not before. Prior to setting up the detailed work of the mission, it was only my brain that was required, but after that I had to gather around me a band of workers.

Universal gift of yoga

This confirmed Sri Swamiji's clear perspective of the potential that yoga held for the physical, mental and emotional development, and spiritual evolution of human-

kind. He knew without a doubt that BSY would become a central location for the global revival of yoga throughout the world. Yoga, as he saw it, was a universal gift that needed only to be experienced and appreciated:

Once people started coming to the ashram for yogasana and pranayama classes, I also thought to try a counter-method. Instead of teaching the usual practical classes, I began to teach a little bit of philosophy. I conducted classes on the Bhagavad Gita and Ramayana but the audience was very small. I started sending Bhagavad Gita publications to other institutions outside, but they would never reply. However, when I sent ordinary fifteen-page booklets on yoga, the thanks would come immediately.

People came for treatment, so I started yoga therapy courses and included shankhaprakshalana classes. People came in great numbers and they got better. The atmosphere, the discipline, the type of food and programs provided them with a pure and simple yogic lifestyle. These courses were stretched from one week to an indefinite period. News of the ashram and its excellence in yoga training spread far and wide. Then people started coming from every part of the world.

People suffering from arthritis, rheumatism, diabetes, blood pressure, all came. Women who were suffering from amenorrhea, dysmenorrhoea or prolapse came to BSY. People came from the West searching for a better way to achieve and maintain their physical, mental and emotional health. They came seeking spiritual illumination, for sadhana and relaxation. Aspirants came from all countries and religions: Hindus, Muslims, Christians, including communists. From all these things, I saw that yoga could catch the human mind and that it is very practical for the people living in this age. They came to BSY because the yoga it was propagating was giving them something positive and something substantial. As a complement to this, I had found ways to present yoga to suit the needs and abilities of aspirants without ever compromising

the purity of my vision of the ancient science of yoga. I gave up resisting the crowds that continually knocked at the gate, came in, and stayed and stayed. I realized I am not doing it. Things happen without my personal participation. Even if I do participate, things will happen; yoga has to become the mother of world cultures.

At this time, yoga was becoming immensely popular throughout the world, and gurus and mahatmas started to pour into India's emerging spiritual marketplace, ready to stake their claim. There was no shortage of self-proclaimed godmen offering their own brand and style of yoga. It would have seemed impossible for anyone to make his voice heard in the ensuing chaos. Yet Sri Swamiji stood out as one of the rare realized masters, unmotivated by a desire for fame or fortune. He was not interested in empty praise, and his only interest was disseminating yoga, which he believed spoke clearly for itself. Sri Swamiji strongly disapproved of the commercialization of yoga, and he never once advertised his school or its courses. Nevertheless, he never suffered a shortage of students; on the contrary, there was no keeping them away. In response to the growing frenzy, he said:

Yoga is not a dance show; it is a vidya, a sacred and profound science of spiritual evolution. You cannot apply the methods of the marketplace to revive yoga. The masses cannot revive the yogic sciences; this can only be done by those who are true yogis, who live the life totally in thought, word and deed . . . There are many people who bring gifts for me and think they will give me happiness. Such acts may give them a feeling of self-gratification, but how can these things please me? I am a sadhu and I am here for a mission. When my work is done, I will no longer be here. The best gift you can bring me is to try to realize what this mission is and how you can best serve it.

Teacher training

Yoga teachers must understand that they are not only responsible for imparting intellectual knowledge. They should feel a responsibility for imparting the way to develop a higher quality of personality. They should not be satisfied only with teaching what is found in textbooks. Yoga is firsthand knowledge, which must be transmitted through experience.

. . . Continue the work with greater vigour and optimism, and gain greater positive results. Do your best to carry the system of yoga from door to door and from shore to shore.

—Swami Satyananda

By 1967, the name of the Bihar School of Yoga had spread around the world. With the success of many short-term workshops and seminars, Sri Swamiji determined that it was time to offer a nine-month course that would nurture and prepare a batch of serious yoga teachers to take the message of yoga to the world. In this groundbreaking program, he promised to offer instruction in every aspect of yoga, from the practical sadhanas to the theories and philosophies expounded in the ancient texts. Participants from twenty countries including Denmark, Australia, North and South America, and Europe signed up for this first International Teacher Training Course. Nonplussed by the simple and rather uncomfortable living conditions, the hot weather, the simple meals and the lack of privacy, they came to receive guidance from a master, and the learning consumed their every waking moment. The teachings Sri Swamiji offered during this period were incredibly thorough, and formed the base for many of the most popular Bihar Yoga textbooks, including *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha*, *Four Chapters on Freedom* and *Early Teachings of Swami Satyananda*.

In 1968, a three-month course drew participants from South Korea, Colombia, Russia, Latvia, Europe, Eurasia and North America. Though Sri Swamiji always maintained that yoga did not belong to one creed, the tradition of Satyananda Yoga developed a reputation for being one of

the most complete yogic systems, with a trademark style of its own. The methodical, systematic, progressive and integral approach, so simple in its style that practices could be easily adapted to suit the needs of both beginners and advanced practitioners, made it stand apart. The most distinguishing feature of Satyananda Yoga at that time, and today, is the great emphasis laid on the development and maintenance of 'awareness' at every stage. Sri Swamiji's guru, Swami Sivananda, had revolutionized yoga, revealing it as a practical means of developing this awareness at an emotional, mental and physical level. This greatly influenced Sri Swamiji's teachings, and he did not allow yoga to be reduced to a series of physical gymnastics and breathing exercises. His interest in yoga was for the development of the entire person, and for the enrichment of humankind as a whole. To him, the purpose of yoga was the evolution of man's higher consciousness, with awareness as the key to achieving this aim.

Creating experts

The teachers who came out of BSY at this time were considered some of the world's most knowledgeable experts in yoga, largely because they received their training directly from a realized master who had the highest expectations of his students, and in turn offered them the highest quality of instruction. It was essential that his students imbibe the true essence of yoga, as a spiritual science, as a science of life. Sri Swamiji took his students through an experience of yoga that affected their whole personality; their understanding was not merely book study, but the result of hours and hours of intense personal practice, which gave them first-hand experience on which they based their knowledge. As they learned, their own lives underwent dramatic and positive changes, and these early teachers became the most effective spokespeople and inspiring proof of the efficacy of yoga. In his introductory talks with new teachers, he laid great stress on the value of their future responsibilities:

Just to improve the physical health is not enough. The mental health must also improve, the nature must change, the personality must change, and the psychological and the psychic framework also have to change. Through yoga practice and lifestyle, you should not merely feel freedom from disease, but freedom from bondage and from the vagaries of the mind. This is why teachers of today are not able to raise the level of their pupils. Now, the time has come when teachers in every part of the world must understand and transmit the true spirit of yoga.

Behind every sick man there is a spiritual man. Behind a diabetic there is a yogi. Behind a man suffering from depression there is an aspirant. When a patient comes for help, teach him yoga and make him better. Treat his sickness, but do not stop there. Take him further into the spiritual domain of life. This is the mistake that most yoga teachers make in the West. They just take a patient with arthritis, rheumatism or insomnia, teach him a few exercises and that is it.

The main purpose of yoga is to bring higher enlightenment to all mankind. When you are teaching yoga to people, you are giving them a great science of life, not just a therapy. Yoga therapy is a by-product, but the purpose of yoga is enlightenment, transformation of the personality. A competent teacher is required for the transformation of the human personality, evolution of the human mind and betterment of our individual circumstances. More important than that, we must know theories, ideas and principles of yoga.

A competent teacher means that he lives the life of yoga and that he knows the science and then he can tell you what you should practise . . . As yoga teachers, you must be thoroughly trained to be able to deal with the needs of a wide variety of sincere people who come to you and trust that you will teach them correctly.

. . . As far as I am concerned, all the yoga schools are doing their best to help mankind. Of course, there is one important thing: the teacher must know the science of yoga very well. Many times, students come to India, stay for one

week, then return to their country and set up schools. In one week they cannot learn yoga. It takes years, even lifetimes of dedicated study and practice under the direct guidance of a guru if you want to be a teacher of the highest calibre.

As a yoga teacher, you should be able to give the best of your personality to your students. And this is only possible if you have self-discipline. Discipline does not mean cruelty. It is a compassionate life of integration.

. . . Always keep in mind that the teacher is the servant. When a person is filled with the highest qualities, he becomes very humble. An arrogant or aggressive teacher is like a tree without fruits. Therefore, in front of your students, you must be very humble. In addition, for you, yoga teaching should be a passage for evolution. Teachers of yoga have laid the cornerstones in different countries. They will build the solid foundations of a new world order in which people can live with optimism and by a philosophy that promotes illumination and growth. As humanity goes on practising yoga, there is no doubt that the quality of mind and the nature of individuals will change. Yoga has to be given to humanity with this spirit, and with profound knowledge and respect.

Since that first Teacher Training Course, the tradition of training yoga teachers has continued as an ongoing, traditional part of BSY's curriculum. This includes an annual one-month course exclusively for Indian students, where they learn to teach the fundamentals of asana, pranayama and relaxation techniques to their neighbours and community members.

Sri Swamiji also provided detailed advice on how students could establish yoga centres in their own villages and cities. These centres became satellite projects of BSY, and carried with them the stamp of approval and wholehearted blessings of a great saint. Today, teachers trained at the Bihar School of Yoga can be found in nearly every village, town and city throughout the world. In this way, Sri Swamiji has touched the lives of businessmen, politicians, shopkeepers and

merchants, housewives, children, the elderly, intellectuals, the physically and mentally challenged, school and university students and staff, mechanics, teachers, cleaners, cooks, academics, administrators, medical professionals and their patients. There are teaching centres throughout the world, run by faithful devotees whose adherence to Sri Swamiji's strict standards ensures that the integrity of the tradition is preserved for future generations to come.

Sannyasa training

Under my leadership, many of the sannyasins renounced their youth for the sake of yoga. Had they not joined us to serve the cause of yoga, I could not have gone so far in my vision. Now yoga has received universal acceptance. Had my sannyasins from far-off lands not spearheaded the movement of yoga, it could have died like many other movements.

I have created a large number of sannyasins who have sacrificed their careers for the cause of yoga. They are fully committed to yoga. It is a big thing; their sacrifice is great. Many are highly qualified in different fields of knowledge. Some are scientists and work in big scientific laboratories in their homelands for five or six months a year, earn a lot of money and then come back to work for us and enjoy their life as sadhus and sannyasins. Some are master musicians too. They also organize and conduct kirtans in an effective manner. But all have dedicated their life to sannyasa and to my mission to spread yoga throughout the world.

—Swami Satyananda

From the very earliest years of his work as a spiritual guide, Sri Swamiji attracted a unique class of people who did not wish to follow the conventional roles laid out for them by their culture and society. Disillusioned by the empty promises made by modern materialism, their search for an alternative and authentic way of living led them to yoga, which served as a catalyst for the discovery of their true calling as sannyasins. The sannyasa lifestyle that Sri Swamiji

represented was not a way of rebellion or escapism, but a life fully engaged and dedicated to self-enquiry, selfless service, devotion to guru and the highest human ideals. Sri Swamiji knew instinctively that the ancient tradition of sannyasa was the answer to the contemporary person's quest for greater meaning in life, and he dedicated himself to guiding people through the difficulties and demands of this noble path:

Sannyasa is the ultimate point of evolution. It is here that you dedicate yourself to the path of enlightenment, wholly and completely. Once you have taken sannyasa, everything is booked. You cannot, you should not, use any of yourself for your own pleasure. Therefore, a sannyasin is one who has created an endowment, a trust, of all his physical, mental, emotional, social and economic resources, and all those resources are directed for one purpose. That purpose is the guru's order. Whatever your guru decides for you, you are to do.

There were none so dear to Sri Swamiji as his sannyasins, for they alone gave themselves over completely to his cause, and they were the key to the success of his global yoga mission. To preserve the nature of his enlightened teachings, it was essential that he work with people committed to serving humanity, who lived to uphold the principles of divine living to the exclusion of their own personal desires and ambitions. The sannyasins trained under his guidance received ample inspiration from Sri Swamiji's own life, which was a constantly evolving expression of the highest standards of sannyasa:

The one duty given to you as a sannyasin is to promote yoga, to teach yoga and to talk yoga. For you there is nothing that could be called 'mine'. For you there is only one thing, yoga. Yoga for health, yoga for mental peace, yoga for spiritual illumination, and yoga for mankind. Your heart must be filled with compassion for all living beings, because everybody is your sister and brother, everybody is your relative. And as long as these people do not understand how to live the life of yoga, your sannyasa is not complete.

Answering the call of sannyasa

According to the ancient ashrama system, sannyasa is reserved for the final years of a person's life, after the karmas and personal desires have been exhausted. Swami Sivananda, however, stepped outside of this limiting concept by initiating young men who had sought him out, some not yet in their twenties, into sannyasa, knowing well that the challenges and demands of ashram life would automatically purify their natures, allowing them to offer the very fruits of their youth to his cause. His own life's experience had shown him that sannyasa is not so much a choice but a calling, and by providing an environment for people to answer that call at any age, he knew that he was contributing to the expansion of human consciousness. Sri Swamiji was living proof of the wisdom of this decision, and as a guru he continued in the same vein, expanding his vision of sannyasa to include young people, householders, foreigners and women:

Sannyasa initiation is for those people who have chosen to dedicate their lives in search of the highest truth through the path of total surrender to the guru. Sannyasa is the path of nivrutti, non-involvement. Here the disciple renounces all personal ambitions, desires and attachments, completely dedicating himself to the service of his guru. The guru then uncovers the inherent potential within the disciple and after training him in the ashram, sends him far and wide to carry out his mission. Through personal sadhana and dedication to guru, the sannyasin evolves and in time serves as a guiding light to others.

Sri Swamiji initiated many women into sannyasa, many of whom contributed and still contribute to his mission as administrators, editors, authors, lecturers, teachers, cooks, construction workers, gardeners, and advanced spiritual sadhakas who have been true to their guru's teachings and inspired others on the spiritual path with their devotion, loyalty, love and compassion.

Many people came to Sri Swamiji with a desire to serve, yet could not walk away from their worldly life and responsibilities. For such people he created the category of *karma sannyasa*, where one aims to live in the world without entanglement in the trappings of worldly life. He or she is free to embrace fully the experiences of career, social life and family, but works to remain free of expectation and demands related to these activities, thereby cultivating spiritual awareness in the activities of daily life. For those who cannot give themselves over to a life of service, karma sannyasa provides a unique opportunity to transform their life's daily activities into acts of selfless service, promoting their spiritual evolution and improving the environment in which they live.

Couples who take karma sannyasa prove to be the most thoughtful and conscientious parents and community leaders, and these karma sannyasins have done a great deal to promote spirituality in the world, for they have the ability to relate very directly to the needs and struggles of the everyday person. They live as inspiring examples of how to live a life of purpose and spiritual fulfilment while still honouring their personal needs and ambitions.

Karma sannyasa has also become a stepping stone for those aspiring for poorna sannyasa, a way to become established in the sannyasa lifestyle before making a life commitment.

First emissaries of yoga

The initial core of sannyasins trained by Sri Swamiji during the early years of the Bihar School of Yoga became his first yoga emissaries. These sannyasins had the honour of being his messengers, and they reverently presented the teachings to people of different cultures, races, requirements and needs. They were his direct channels and, with his guidance, they helped to establish the highest quality and standards in yoga centres and ashrams worldwide. Along with this priceless contribution to uphold the quality of yoga teaching, the commitment of his sannyasins also guaranteed that the purity

of yoga would be passed on to future generations, despite the ever-growing market of commercialized yoga teaching:

In India, the swamis and the sannyasins who wear this geru robe took a pledge, a sankalpa, that they would preserve the science of yoga in its entirety, even if the people of the world didn't want it. That is why the sect was created. This is not a Hindu order, a religious order nor an Indian order. This is the tradition that dedicated itself to the preservation of higher sciences, the science of yoga, the Samkhya philosophy, because man must have this science. Otherwise, at any time, if political chaos takes grip of a country, the whole culture is destroyed along with its spirituality.

Three-year sannyasa training

Sannyasa training was always an implicit aspect of ashram life, and many people who came to BSY for yoga classes became inspired to stay on and become sannyasins. In 1970, Sri Swamiji planted the seeds of a new generation of sannyasins by inaugurating a formal three-year international Sannyasa Training Course free of charge. The course attracted one hundred and eight men and women from different age groups, backgrounds, languages and cultures. The youngest member of the group was ten-year-old Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati, newly initiated into poorna sannyasa and spiritual successor to Sri Swamiji.

In his introduction to the motley crew, Sri Swamiji applauded their brave decision to participate in his 'experiment', which he promised would be the most challenging and demanding three years of their lives. What he wanted from them was nothing short of 'steel', the kind of strength that could withstand the heat of any kind of difficulty and hardship in life.

During the sannyasa training, participants were expected to conduct themselves with the attitude of a sannyasin, preparing themselves for a life of surrender and self-sacrifice. To Sri Swamiji the experience of sannyasa, even for a short

period, was a medium for people to cultivate their higher awareness. Regardless of whether the candidates went on to serve his mission or live in the world, they would inevitably contribute to the advancement of society as a whole.

Sannyasins of the Saraswati order are responsible for the preservation and propagation of higher learning, and the sannyasa trainees were expected to honour this tradition by becoming expert authorities on all aspects of yoga, its practices, its philosophies and its origins:

For centuries and centuries, this yoga was buried, shrouded in mystery. It was in a state of complete decadence. Countries and cultures never knew what it was. Historians were completely ignorant of it. Finally, the day has come when there is peaceful administration, law and order throughout the world, so the sannyasins have come out to give the science of yoga back to the people. However, if ever they find that the people do not want yoga, you will no longer see this robe in society.

Sri Swamiji personally conducted all their classes, which were broken down into month-long sessions. They learned to chant the upanishadic texts, line by line, and engaged in prolonged mantra anushthanas, maintaining mouna for the entire thirty-day period. Participants took such detailed notes during his hatha yoga classes that they were used to compile the classic yoga text *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha*. Sri Swamiji was with them the whole time, observing and monitoring their personal development, and providing the trust, support and faith they needed to get through the most demanding moments.

Much of the three-year training was based on the experiences that Sri Swamiji had in Rishikesh. When they were not busy filling their minds with a lifetime's worth of ancient teachings, the participants were expected to engage themselves completely in karma yoga. They worked in the garden, compiled and edited textbooks, ran the printing press, worked in the kitchen, helped to build the new ashram in Rajnandgaon, and took part in the preparations

for the monumental 1973 Golden Jubilee Yoga Convention. Ultimately, the difficulty of ashram life and the total effacement of personal time and space proved to be too much for many of the candidates, and within the first four months the group had dwindled to less than half its original size. The numbers continued to drop, but those who stayed to complete the entire three years went on to become stalwarts of the tradition, adepts in the yogic sciences, doing great work to help further their guru's mission.

Sannyasa training has become one of BSY's hallmark offerings, and though there would not be another three-year course offered for several decades, six-month and one-year-long programs have continued to draw participants from around the world. Over the years since that first program, hundreds of people have come to Munger to undergo the transformative effects of the sannyasa training, and many Satyananda sannyasins walk the earth, their lives dedicated to inner development, spiritual awareness and selfless service:

Therefore, all of you who wear this robe, whether householders or sannyasins, must remember that you bear a responsibility to carry the higher spiritual values of life, to love unity, to be at peace with others and with yourself, to be non-aggressive, silent, humble, grand, noble. This is what you have to be. This is not a social order. Everyone who meditates, who wants to attain samadhi or higher spiritual life, can definitely use this robe as a means and an aid. So, here at Bihar School of Yoga we are committed to perpetuating this culture, this yogic philosophy, which is wanted the world over, as the yoga of modern times.

Golden Jubilee Yoga Convention

In 1973, the Bihar School of Yoga hosted the Golden Jubilee Yoga Convention in honour of the fiftieth anniversary of Swami Sivananda's Sannyasa Diwas and Sri Swamiji's fiftieth birthday. The monumental five-day event firmly placed Munger on the international map and marked BSY as an

honoured gathering place for the world's greatest spiritual authorities. The convention attracted thousands of delegates from around the world, including revered gurus and saints, sannyasins, scientists, doctors, educators, researchers, eminent political figures, yoga teachers, musicians, artists, religious leaders and ordinary people from all walks of life who gathered to bathe in the unifying light of yoga.

As the guest of honour and host of the convention, Sri Swamiji could have rightfully taken his place amongst the many dignitaries and esteemed guests, and left the work of managing the convention to the sannyasins and volunteers who came for that very purpose. Yet, he worked harder than anyone present to ensure that the entire event went smoothly and without a hitch. Ever the humble servant, he personally saw to the comfort and needs of every single guest, and in the absence of adequate housing at BSY, he made special arrangements with schools, temples, ashrams and private homes throughout Munger to provide accommodation for everyone who attended the event. While overseeing every aspect of the convention, he still managed to be present to welcome all the delegates and introduce all the speakers and specialists to the stage.

When it came time for him to speak, he delivered a speech that left the entire audience spellbound. For his efforts and success in spreading yoga for the goodwill of humanity, the leaders of India's spiritual traditions acknowledged Sri Swamiji as an adept and foremost exponent of yoga. Due to the overwhelming success of this event, BSY was widely recognized throughout India and the world as a reputed and authentic centre for learning yoga and the spiritual sciences.

At that time, Munger was a small remote city, with no air links, and very poor rail and road transport facilities. To bring so many people together for this five-day event was nothing short of a miracle. Ten years after the establishment of Bihar School of Yoga, Sri Swamiji was well on his way to fulfilling his guru's mandate.

4

Expanding the Horizons

The importance and application of yoga is increasing so intensely and so rapidly in the present age of science that I have to repeat again, that yoga will be the culture of tomorrow.

—Swami Satyananda

In less than a decade, BSY had built itself a firm reputation as a legitimate and unique training ground for modern-day yogis, and an epicentre for advanced studies in yoga and spirituality. By 1968, Sri Swamiji was confident that the work would speak for itself, and he began to send his first batch of fully trained sannyasins out into the world to teach yoga. As selfless servants, dedicated to their guru's mission, they would work free of charge as an offering of devotion for the upliftment of society. Through their dedicated efforts, they helped to establish the highest standards of yoga education in centres and ashrams throughout the world.

After the completion of BSY's fifth year, Sri Swamiji embarked on his first International Tour in 1968, backed now by the strong reputation of his growing institution. His first destination was Swami Sivananda's samadhi sthal in Rishikesh in order to receive blessings and inspiration for the tour. That year he visited Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, Japan, USA, Canada, England, France, Holland, Sweden, Austria and Italy. He gave classes, lectures, and television and radio interviews

to packed houses and rapt audiences wherever he went. In August of the following year, he visited Northern Ireland, Denmark, France, Belgium, West Germany, England and Australia. Year after year, he continued to visit new countries, establishing himself and BSY as the leading representative of yoga and spirituality in the world.

Demand for his teachings was so great that he often worked overtime to accommodate last minute bookings. The schedule he followed during his tours was unimaginably tight and demanding. He would literally fly into a country, deliver a series of non-stop lectures and classes for a few days, and then catch another flight to a new destination with no respite in between. He was an embodiment of yoga, and during all those years, though he rarely rested, moving constantly between different time zones and climates, he never fell ill. He was the epitome of balance and equipoise, and always maintained his sharp intelligence, candid wit, and a positive, joyful childlike presence.

Guided by intuition

He possessed a sixth sense about the needs of the day, and without waiting for requests he took himself directly to the people, lecturing at hospitals and universities, community halls, churches, synagogues, private homes and school auditoriums. His talks were recorded and videotaped, his interviews published in local newspapers and broadcasted on television. Soon his face was recognized wherever he went.

The International Yoga Fellowship really took flight at this time, and people lined up to give cash donations to the cause. In Europe, he started a United Yoga Federation, with chapters in Italy, Britain, Switzerland, France and Germany, all centrally connected by Sri Swamiji and the Bihar School of Yoga. He moved through countries like a comet, blazing down the walls of misunderstanding and raising the flag of yoga in glorious victory. Sri Swamiji possessed the influence of a powerful political leader, yet he did not rule by force or false promises. His one and only weapon was a *yogadanda*, a

stick used to regulate the breath, and he won countless hearts and minds through the strength of his conviction and the power of yoga. Throughout the world, people were talking about yoga, practising yoga, growing in yoga and spreading yoga. At the helm was Sri Swamiji.

Though his Indian passport could have made international travel quite complicated, he never ran into any red tape. He was promptly given visas and travel permits wherever he went. He visited Iraq during Saddam Hussein's rule where he and a gathering of hundreds celebrated Guru Poornima without fear of disturbance or interruption. He travelled to Tehran as the honoured guest of the Shah, who treated him like royalty. He was asked to speak on television for fifteen minutes, and wound up spending three hours answering questions with viewers who called in to get his opinion and advice on yoga, Islam and Sufism. The television company was so pleased with his appearance that they gifted him two first-class air tickets to the US. Nowhere were his teachings questioned or challenged, not in Russia or China, not in Europe or South America, not even by powerful religious leaders:

Once I met the Pope at the Vatican. When I told him I taught yoga, he remarked, "Yoga is an oriental philosophy and we are occidental. How will you integrate eastern philosophy with western culture?" I replied, "As was done two thousand years ago. As an oriental philosophy, Christianity is firmly rooted in occidental culture. Similarly, yoga is an oriental science and it can also fit into occidental society." The Pope was silenced by my forthright reply. He knew that Christianity is an oriental religion. So my path was clear. All the important Christian centres welcomed me, Catholic and Protestant. Everywhere I was received with respect and assisted in every way.

Proof of the global culture of yoga

The Pope himself gave instructions to Catholic leaders in South America to take special care of Sri Swamiji during

his visit to Colombia, Venezuela and Argentina. He was the special guest at the many churches and monasteries in those countries and freely taught yoga to the monks and nuns. He even expounded with thoughtful expertise the meaning and purpose of their spiritual practices. Many of the laypeople in South America became sannyasins, and carried on in those countries as missionaries of yoga. Always, he encouraged them to continue following their own religion along with the yoga practices, and promoted an illumined appreciation for all the spiritual traditions of the world.

During a visit to the San Agustín forest in Colombia, he found ancient statues of pre-Colombian figures doing yoga postures, and he used this as proof of the once-global culture of yoga. In Scandinavia, he found similar archaeological evidence to support his claim. He published photos of these findings in *Yoga Vidya* and *Yoga* magazine.

Ambassador of a timeless message

He truly actualized the mandate to spread the message of yoga ‘from door to door and shore to shore’, and throughout the 1970s and into the late 1980s, Sri Swamiji continued to travel the world, working without rest to get his message to every corner of the earth. The need for yoga, he knew, was there. He only had to look at the crumbling societies and structures around the world to see that there was something essential missing in the modern way of life. He saw himself as an ambassador of a timeless message, walking in the footsteps of the great spiritual luminaries of recent history:

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Swami Vivekananda took yoga to the West, followed by Swami Ramatirtha, Paramahansa Yogananda, Sri Aurobindo, and my guru, Swami Sivananda. Recently, hundreds more have been instrumental in spreading the yogic culture. It is these sannyasins who, without a home or family of their own, have carried this science from shore to shore. They exist for just one mission, to distribute the tool of peace, yoga. And today, people's perception has changed.

It was in 1968 that I went on a world tour for the first time. I travelled throughout India and Asia, and all over the world, to Europe, Australia and the South Pacific, to North and South America, to the Scandinavian countries, England and Ireland. I soon realized that people everywhere in the world are searching for themselves. It was at that time that the wave had already started in the West and the whole West was passing through a phase of transition. This transition was a result of great frustration. After a century and a half or even more of the industrial revolution, people in the West were facing a great crisis in their personal lives.

Initially they had had great faith in this technology. They thought it would bring them nearer to peace and happiness. They thought and anticipated that this would bring nations and families closer and that this technology would bring people into one fold, but all their dreams appeared to be shattered. Technology brought them stress and strain, split the families, disturbed the social system, took man far away from himself, created turbulence in his mind, made him more selfish, made him more self-centred and it was at that time that the hippy wave erupted and rebelled against society.

I sensed that the whole modern world was undergoing a state of frustration. At this time, what had India to offer? Of course, the West has offered a lot of things, but whatever the western culture has offered, it has offered to the external man. It has offered him a nice bed and bedroom but no sleep. It has offered social security but no emotional security. There are two parts to your life. You are an external man and at the same time, you are an internal man. All of your external, necessary needs are looked after by the modern culture, but the soul is completely and totally ignored. Many of you may be going to a sanctum sanctorum weekly or even daily, but that is not enough for the inner man.

So I began to question what India has to offer to the western people. My conclusion was that India had perhaps

the most important thing, known as yoga. If India could give this yogic way of life to the rest of the world there would be great satisfaction. My calculation turned out to be precise.

Revival of yoga in India

By the mid-1980s, there was hardly a place on the entire planet that did not have on it the stamp of Satyananda Yoga, and there were ashrams and centres emerging all over the world. Sri Swamiji was equally committed to spreading yoga in his homeland, for he knew that the rapid modernization of India threatened to rob its people of their most precious resource.

In his own All-India Tours, he travelled the length and breadth of the subcontinent numerous times, visiting every major city and town in every state. His message was clear: the revival of yoga was the duty and responsibility of every citizen of India, and the very future of the country depended on it. He had the same passion for yoga that his guru possessed, and just as Swami Sivananda was honoured as a saint and sage, everywhere Sri Swamiji went within India he was received with the reverence and respect offered to the greatest realized masters. The impact he had on the Indian people was powerful and immediate:

Until recently, people in India accepted that yoga was beneficial and that it had been practised in the past by saints and sadhus, but that was all. Now, since I have been meeting the Indian people and discussing and talking to them about the relevance of yoga in their day-to-day household life, they have given up this notion and say that yoga is very important in life.

I have been travelling a lot through India since 1964 giving programs, seminars, yoga camps and conventions in every state capital and major city. Many ashrams and yoga centres have been established with affiliation to the Bihar School of Yoga. Today, yoga teachers from the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger teach yoga in schools all over the country. Yoga is now taught in the Defence Services.

Modern-day sage

In spite of the great fanfare that preceded Sri Swamiji's arrival to every village, town, city and country, he continued to interact with the people he met as an ordinary citizen of the world. The inspiration he offered during these tours was the fuel that instigated real changes in society. The breadth of Sri Swamiji's knowledge and understanding of both the ancient and modern sciences and philosophies gave him mass appeal wherever he went, and he was welcomed into the homes and hearts of people from every conceivable background, religion and faith. His wisdom inspired thousands to embrace spirituality as a part of their modern lives, and the yoga he taught provided the necessary practical tools for developing greater peace and harmony.

He became known for his thorough understanding and appreciation of world religions, and encouraged people to integrate yoga practices into their existing religious activities. In every place he lectured, he was promptly recognized as an exceptional modern-day sage who could speak with clarity and wisdom on every topic related to yoga and spirituality. Today, yoga as Sri Swamiji expounded it, in its pure form revised for the modern man, is included as a subject in the syllabi of universities, medical colleges, research centres, and psychological institutions. It is taught and practised as an aid to rehabilitation in prisons and jails, drug abuse and disability centres. It is promoted by businessmen in their national and multinational companies, it is taught to small children in primary schools, and it is used as an aid to creativity in arts institutions. Yoga is no longer bound to the shores of India, nor is it secreted away in a cryptic form that only a handful of initiates can understand. It is a gift for every man, woman and child:

To win people's hearts is a great thing, it is not a joke. The seers and sages are duty-bound to win over the world. Adi Guru Shankaracharya was credited with conquering the

world one thousand five hundred years ago, as was Swami Vivekananda in modern times.

. . . People bowed before me, offered me their sons and daughters to help spread yoga and donated generously to this cause. I have received respect and unqualified support for my efforts everywhere. It is unique that I am acceptable to one and all. This is also one of the characteristics of a world conqueror. My yoga ashrams and centres are dotted all over the Christian world. I conquered people's hearts and made them my own.

Karna Chaura as Ganga Darshan

Soon after its creation, Sivanandashram was not large enough to take on the huge numbers of students who continued to pour through its gates year after year. Sri Swamiji modestly expected no more than fifteen to twenty people to visit at any one time, a far cry from the two hundred plus who regularly showed up for classes, workshops, blessings and inspiration. No one was ever turned away, and people slept wherever they could find space: in the sadhana hall, in the classrooms, outside on the lawn.

Expansion of the facilities was a slow-moving process. Even the construction of a three-story residential building was not sufficient to accommodate the crowds, and the ashram was constantly booked far beyond capacity. There was simply not enough space on the property to allow for further expansion of its facilities. As early as 1967, Sri Swamiji began to consider relocating the entire ashram. He had his sights set on Karna Chaura, the hill just beside BSY.

It was only fitting that Sri Swamiji thought to move the school and ashram to its original place of inspiration. It was also a very practical decision, for the proximity to the original campus would make the transition much smoother. Furthermore, it was much better situated as it ensured that the building would not succumb to the annual flooding that kept residents of the Sivanandashram underwater for months at a time. Unfortunately, the local officials were not

eager to part with the land, and it took Sri Swamiji years of constant appeals before they would agree to sell the property. Sri Swamiji was relentless, and when it became clear that he would not accept defeat, they submitted and the whole hill became his.

In 1976, Karna Chaura was officially renamed ‘Ganga Darshan’. This name is a reference not only to the stunning view of the sacred river below, but also symbolizes the vision of prana shakti that flows within pingala nadi. The vision and control of this energy channel is an essential attainment for the true yogi. This name represents the high standards Sri Swamiji held for himself and his institution. He tells:

‘Ganga Darshan’ has two meanings. One is vision of Ganga and the other is vision of prana shakti or pingala nadi. Ganga represents pingala, Yamuna represents ida, Saraswati represents sushumna, and for yoga, control of pingala nadi, vision or knowledge of pingala nadi is very essential. I will tell you a small story. One day when Hanuman got up from his sleep, he felt very hungry. He did not see anything to eat, but he saw the sun, Balaravi. So he swallowed up the sun, and at once the three worlds became dark. What this means is that Hanuman stopped the flow of his prana completely. To stop pingala nadi completely is to have control over prana, and a yogi must have control over prana. If you do not have control over prana, you cannot have control over the elements or over the life process. So I named the ashram Ganga Darshan with these two things in mind.

Realization of a vision

It would be another two years before anyone could inhabit the property at Ganga Darshan and, in the meantime, courses went on as usual at the original BSY. Sri Swamiji began to develop his plans for Ganga Darshan, which would include a massive sadhana hall, an expansive research library, space for printing and binding books, several residential facilities for males and females, a temple, a large kitchen and gardens for growing vegetables, fruits and flowers. Swami Sivananda

had always dreamed of a global yoga university, and with the purchase of Ganga Darshan, Sri Swamiji felt confident that he could finally make this dream a reality. It would not be an ordinary university, but a holistic learning institution where students from all directions of the world would come for undergraduate courses and postgraduate degrees earned under the ancient gurukul system of education.

Much later, in 1982, when the development of the ashram was nearly complete, Sri Swamiji recalled the powerful vision he had experienced in Rameshwaram after the 1953 All-India tour with Swami Sivananda. There he had seen several buildings rising above a hill, and a river flowing below. The location of Karna Chaura, the layout of the buildings he was mapping out and the river below the property, everything was exactly as he had seen in that vision. He was now seeing it again, some thirty years later, with absolute clarity and detail. It was a moment that proved to him that he was not actually ‘doing’ anything. Rather, he was an instrument and the work itself was being accomplished by a higher, mightier power.

He knew that without a doubt, destiny was the controlling power. He even said that he did not design Ganga Darshan, instead that the plans were finalized long before they came to his mind, in cosmic space. He simply provided the hand that drew them out, but every corner of every building was predestined. For this reason, he would not alter any aspect of the design. When it came time to construct the Main Building, he was so adamant about adhering to the blueprint that when a builder changed the plans for one of the toilets he had the room closed off permanently.

First residents

In January 1978, Sri Swamiji sent a small group of sannyasins to live at Ganga Darshan permanently. They were to begin the preparations for the eventual move. It was still largely covered by jungle, and the buildings that stood were in such disrepair that they did most of their living outside.

Hundreds of years of abandonment and misuse had given the area a heavy, haunted feeling, and the first few nights were so frightening that nobody could sleep. Sri Swamiji suggested that they organize an akhand kirtan for twenty-four hours. The harmonizing vibrations of the kirtans had the effect of purifying the entire area and calming their nerves. After a few days, Sri Swamiji arrived and personally walked through the entire property, and the effect of his darshan settled the errant spirits for the last time.

The simplicity of those days were similar to Sri Swamiji's days in Rishikesh, and the sannyasins had to face many of the same inconveniences and hardships: wild animals, poisonous snakes, scorpions and swarms of mosquitoes. There was no local water source, so supplies had to be brought up from a distant well. They bathed in a small pond at the bottom of the hill and used the open fields as toilets. In the absence of a telephone, all messages for Sri Swamiji were couriered to BSY by bicycle. In the daytime, Sri Swamiji would bring more sannyasins and visitors to help with the work: preparing the land for farming, clearing out the usable buildings of rubble and broken glass, and razing the jungle to prepare space for new construction. They built a few grass huts on a clearing, and Sri Swamiji had a *machan*, a raised platform built on stilts, from where he would deliver satsangs to the growing number of day visitors, many of them locals who came to watch the curious sight of foreigners working so hard and with such dedication. The work itself was difficult and demanding, the hours were long and the days swelteringly hot, but no one seemed to notice or care, for they were fuelled by love for Sri Swamiji. His constant presence provided an endless supply of energy and inspiration.

Construction of Ganga Darshan

Relocating BSY from its modest beginnings to the new, grand scale Ganga Darshan was a monumental step in the yoga movement. The building itself was a labour of love, in

which countless numbers of devotees and volunteers came together to work for the realization of this remarkable vision.

The construction for Ganga Darshan started in earnest on Guru Poornima 1978, and thousands of people came to participate in the inauguration ceremony and watch Sri Swamiji perform the *pratishtha*, the invocation rites, in the half-finished sadhana hall. The place was spilling over with guests, and for several hours people poured in to offer their respects and receive Sri Swamiji's blessings. Sri Swamiji delivered a beautiful benediction speech, announcing his plans for Ganga Darshan and the future of yoga as a world-changing culture.

Construction and development carried on at a rapid pace. Though he had once been fiercely resistant to developing ashrams, Sri Swamiji now took on the challenge of building Ganga Darshan with his characteristic enthusiasm and zeal. He had a remarkable knack for fundraising and he often said he could squeeze money out of the stingiest of misers merely by looking at them. He was not just collecting money, he was collecting egos, and it seemed people lined up to give him both. There was never any shortage of funds to cover the costs of the buildings or for caring for the residents who gave their time, labour, toil and sweat to the cause. Sri Swamiji spared no expense, and his sannyasins scoured the subcontinent to find the finest quality products and building materials to manifest his vision. On Guru Poornima 1982, Sri Swamiji laid the foundation stone for the monumental seven-storey Main Building, replacing King Karna's ageing palace. It was to be a grand symbol of cosmic consciousness rising through the chakras, from mooladhara to sahasrara. From the top of the building, one can see the surrounding area for miles, a fitting symbol of the visionary capabilities of such a realized master.

Expansion of vision

The growth and expansion of Sri Swamiji's vision of yoga was like a great tree, with branches that reached out to cover

all of the needs of humanity. Yoga was given not merely as a series of physical exercises and breathing techniques; instead, as a way of being and an overall approach to life for greater harmony and peace in the world.

Swami Sivananda's offering of yoga was rooted in generosity and compassion for the needs of others. In 1984, Sri Swamiji established Sivananda Math to honour this aspiration. As an independent, non-profit fundraising organization, Sivananda Math provides financial support for charitable organizations throughout India, with the aim of improving the quality of life and raising the self-esteem of the poorest and most underprivileged members of society. Over the years, Sivananda Math has contributed to projects that provide: housing, food and clothing to village communities; ashrams for orphaned children; after-school outreach programs for inner-city youth; and free medical care, including eye clinics, prenatal care, assistance to the handicapped and elderly, and dispensation of medicines.

Another area of expansion that Sri Swamiji focused on was scientific research on yoga. He understood that the science of yoga held great physical and psychological potential and that it was an inviting field of research for modern physiologists and scientific investigation. Through Bihar School of Yoga, he experimented with yoga nidra, and instigated research in hospitals and medical colleges into the effects of yoga and the management of common disease such as asthma, diabetes, digestive ailments, obesity, arthritis, hypertension cardiovascular disorders, skin disorders and many other physiological ailments. The aim of this research was to investigate scientifically and to document the therapeutic and mind-expanding benefits of the yoga techniques.

Teachers and sannyasins were sent from BSY to different medical centres, hospitals and research centres. They talked to doctors, conducted yoga training and teaching, ran the tests and analyzed the research data. Sri Swamiji presented many details of BSY's research findings in *Yoga* and *Yoga*

Vidya magazine articles and in his yoga health management publications, *Yogic Management of Asthma and Diabetes*, *The Practices of Yoga for the Digestive System*, *The Effects of Yoga on Hypertension*, etc. In this manner, along with his satsangs, yoga seminars, conventions and camps he kept the public informed of the positive effects of yogic practices on the human mind and body. In one of his satsangs he told his audience:

When I came into the arena, I told the people that yoga was intended to bring about co-ordination, harmony, positive health and a deeper understanding of one's own self. At first, they thought I was playing a publicity stunt in order to spread yoga. It was a challenge for me to convince most people, especially the scientists and doctors, intellectuals and deep-rooted religious people, that yoga had something to offer them. However, I definitely succeeded, and I continued to keep all strata of society informed of research into yoga.

To maintain the high standards of research and reporting that had given yoga recognition in the scientific and medical communities, Sri Swamiji established the Yoga Research Foundation (YRF) in 1984. Since its inception, the YRF has become a major resource for yogic study and research. Over the years, research programs have expanded to include studies into the effects of yoga on military and police personnel, cancer treatment, athletic and sports performances, and childhood and teenage development. One of the greatest advancements for the organization was the implementation of computerized records and an advanced filing system that provides easy access to the volumes of information that have been collected over the years. Largely because of the efforts of the Yoga Research Foundation, yoga is now an accepted science for the attainment of physical and mental health, and the means for expanding human consciousness and potential. In this way, Sri Swamiji was able to fulfil another mandate of Swami Sivananda, "Give yoga a scientific base."

5

Beginning of a New Era

Prayer for the fulfilment of a wish is a very powerful thing if it is done properly. It has its own laws. If this wish is made properly then it is like a bombshell. However, when you make a wish you must also pledge to renounce something, to pledge something in return which is equivalent to your wish. God made me victorious globally and I pledged to return that.

—Swami Satyananda

In 1983, Sri Swamiji was on a lecture tour in Australia, and for the first time since he started his yoga campaign he felt apathy and disinterest for his work. At the time, he could not understand this sudden shift in attitude. Yoga had reached the farthest corners of the earth, yet he suddenly felt as if his lectures no longer served a purpose.

At the same time, he met with a near-fatal car accident. He was hospitalized for nearly two months, and upon returning to India he underwent a period of recuperation to recover from the injuries to his arms, legs and back. In spite of the severity of his condition, very few people were aware of the situation. Sri Swamiji lived by clear principles: share your joy with others, suffer alone. On returning to India, he stayed in Mumbai to recuperate. It was at this time that he had a sudden urge to go to Tryambakeshwar.

Remembering the pledge in Tryambakeshwar

Sri Swamiji had not visited the holy site in nearly twenty years. Swami Satsangi, who had by now come to live in the ashram and accompanied him in all his travels, hired a taxi and they left immediately. Sri Swamiji was still incapacitated and required a wheelchair to move about. It was with great difficulty that he bowed down to the jyotirlinga. Touching his forehead to the sacred stone, he immediately recalled the pledge he had made twenty years ago, “I will work with whatever inspiration or help you give me for twenty years. After that, I will leave everything and come to you. Just twenty years.”

Twenty years was all he had asked for, enough time to build up his mission and fulfil his duty to his guru. Then he would walk away and return to the service of his Lord. He realized that the twenty-year period was over. He understood without a doubt that the strange apathy he had experienced in Australia and the car accident that followed were only to remind him of the promise he had made to his ishta devata.

He looked back at the preceding twenty years and took stock of the achievements: the ashram he dreamt of had been built. The Bihar School of Yoga had been successfully established and he had an able successor, which ensured that the future propagation of yoga would continue. He was recognized the world over as a yogic master and guru to thousands, receiving the honoured respect of presidents and poets, dignitaries and saints. He had fame and fortune, more than he had ever wanted. Was he perchance caught up in the web of maya and begun to believe that these were ‘his’ achievements? As soon as he asked the question, he knew the answer. It was only by God’s grace that success had come his way and therefore, none of it was his. The Lord himself had kindly called him back to Tryambakeshwar for a reminder of their pact. He realized it was time to leave Munger.

Sri Swamiji was so absorbed in contemplation of his ishta that he completely forgot his injuries, and walked to

the waiting taxi without any assistance. The pain that had wracked his body for months suddenly and completely disappeared. Such was the mercy of God that as soon as he remembered his promise, the divine grace immediately eliminated his suffering and injuries. Sri Swamiji tells:

When you are in front of God, you realize your own omissions and lapses very soon. When we really feel that we have made certain mistakes, God's grace comes. If man is guilty, it is before God only; he is not responsible before any other authority. We are not at all guilty before any other person. I do not need to plead guilty before the police or the government. I have to confess my guilt before God alone. Thus, I realized my gross mistake for I had not fulfilled the promise I had made to God. It had gone out of my mind. Why did I forget? Maya held me in her sway because success is also an illusion. When you achieve something, when you slide over the crest of success, you are possessed by maya. Success gives birth to intoxication and you forget the commitment, if any, you have made.

Mission accomplished

The year 1983 heralded the end of the twenty-year cycle Swami Sivananda had predicted about Sri Swamiji's life back in 1957, "In 1983 your work for the institution will come to a close and after that you will work for the cosmos."

Sri Swamiji had worked tirelessly to bring the teachings of yoga to the world, and in the process, he had gained recognition as a teacher, a guru, an author, a research scientist, the founding administrator of an enormous ashram and celebrated as a worldwide authority. However, it was not his intention to become any of these things; in his heart he was forever a sannyasin, working to fulfil his guru's mandate. Therefore, when the time was right, he offered the fruits of all his accomplishments as *guru dakshina*, offering to his master. He said:

In 1963, I asked the Lord to help me fulfill my mission for twenty years, and in 1983 I gave it all up. I had only one goal in the beginning, which was to restore yoga to its original status and glory. This was my guru's order, and through me this mission was fulfilled, and yoga was universally accepted. If it is the wish of the guru, then his grace also comes down upon you. There is simply no scope for doubt in this regard.

Upon returning to Munger from his profound experience in Tiryanbakeshwar, Sri Swamiji sent a telegram to Swami Niranjanananda in the US and instructed him to return to India immediately.

This was the ultimate test of Swami Niranjan's discipleship; at twenty-three years of age, he had spent the larger portion of his life abroad, teaching yoga and spreading his guru's message. He was showing great promise of becoming a worldwide spiritual master. At that moment in time, he was drawing up plans to build an ashram in North America, and had just purchased land for the construction. However, he was first and foremost a disciple, and without argument or hesitation he obeyed his guru's orders and dropped all his plans and dreams. He returned to India before two weeks had passed.

Swami Niranjanananda's return

After a twelve-year absence, Swami Niranjan was a stranger to the customs and ways of his own country; even his Hindi sounded foreign and unnatural. While he was away, Munger had transformed from a sleepy, out-of-the-way town to a busy centre of commercial activity, and a popular destination for Indians and foreigners alike. The cause of these changes became apparent when he caught his first glimpses of the sprawling Ganga Darshan ashram. The newly completed Main Building rose above the town like a mighty sentinel announcing to the world that the Bihar School of Yoga was at the helm of the global yoga renaissance. It would be Swami

Niranjan's responsibility to carry his guru's vision into the future for generations to come.

Immediately upon his arrival at the ashram, Sri Swamiji appointed his young disciple as president of BSY and handed over to him the inheritance of the mandate he had received from Swami Sivananda. Sri Swamiji was ready to immediately leave everything in the young disciple's capable hands and head his own way, but Swami Niranjan convinced him to stay to teach him 'the tricks of the trade'. Sri Swamiji agreed, granting him five years, during which Swami Niranjan was expected to learn every aspect of the ashram's administration, as well as how to give appropriate guidance and support to the yoga movement and to the many Satyananda yoga centres and ashrams around the world. During most of this five-year period Sri Swamiji toured the world, dispensing every last bit of his yogic wisdom before officially going into retirement, leaving Swami Niranjan to find his own way in his new role.

In spite of his young years, this was a challenge that Swami Niranjan was quite familiar with, as he had already spent the greater part of his life managing duties and responsibilities that few adults can handle. He was undoubtedly the most qualified person for the task, as his entire life was devoted to his guru, and Sri Swamiji had been preparing him since birth. Thousands of miles might have separated them, but he knew that Sri Swamiji was constantly by his side giving direction, guidance and inspiration, as he was completely attuned to Sri Swamiji.

Swami Niranjan in many ways mirrored his guru: he was an accomplished yogi powered by an inexhaustible source of energy, innovative in his thinking, broad-minded, extraordinarily intelligent and incredibly versatile in his talents and abilities. He also possessed a uniquely inspiring energy, filled with optimism, gentleness, gracefulness, compassion, joy and understanding. During those five years that Sri Swamiji granted him, he successfully mastered his role as president of the Bihar School of Yoga, and won the

hearts of every ashram resident and devotee who passed through its gates. Under his skilful guidance, BSY continued to provide the highest quality yogic education, and the mission expanded into new horizons to meet the changing needs of the twenty-first century.

Departure from Ganga Darshan

The man who would leave Bihar School of Yoga is a great fool, is he not? It is a very powerful yoga centre and people are well acquainted with it in every corner of the world. Many instructors and teachers have been trained by this institution, and people have supreme faith in the teachings and philosophies presented there. However, my mission is fulfilled and that chapter of my life is closed. I will not look back. I am not a limited individual. I was born with a destiny to fulfil. My guru told me everything about my mission and myself. I have had many strange experiences. I have told you of my past experiences, but I have had some experiences and visions about the future too. I will tell you about these later, in the future, after they come true.

—Swami Satyananda

True to his promise, Sri Swamiji gave Swami Niranjanananda exactly five years to master his administrative duties. On 8.8.88, he closed that chapter of his life, quietly walking away, never to return.

It was an incredible shock to the ashram community. Only a week before, they had celebrated Guru Poornima, and Sri Swamiji had joined in the festivities with radiant joy and enthusiasm, his heart pouring forth a fountain of love. Only a few people were informed of his plan to leave Munger, and even they held on to the thread of hope that he would change his mind and stay. His decision, however, was firm, and without any fanfare, he walked through the main gate of Ganga Darshan one last time. His only possessions were two dhotis and one hundred and eight rupees, which Swami Niranjan had insisted on giving him. Sri Swamiji re-entered

the life he had abandoned to establish the yoga mission, and roamed the earth again as an anonymous sadhu, guided by God, guru, destiny and faith.

After leaving Munger, Sri Swamiji went on a series of *yatras*, pilgrimages, to the holy sites of India and Nepal, reconnecting with God and searching for the next stage of his divine purpose. He moved throughout the subcontinent, knowing that he was following a predestined course, and that it would be only a matter of time before he received his new set of instructions.

The telling moment came during an extended stay in Tryambakeshwar, the place where the course of his life had initially taken shape. Once accustomed to staying in the finest hotels and accommodations, he now called a tiny, dark and damp *goshala*, a cowshed, his home. Situated at the foot of a beautiful hill called Neel Parvat, he happily spent two months of the late rainy season there, immersed in sadhana. On 8th September, the birthday of Swami Sivananda, he experienced a storm that raged with such a force that he could not determine whether it was happening outside his room or internally, within the confines of his own consciousness. Amidst the erupting thunderclaps, he heard a voice pronounce with absolute clarity, “Chitabhoomi!” This single word led him to Rikhhia, where his work for God began in earnest with the performance of the *panchagni sadhana*, the austerity of five fires, one of the most difficult tantric sadhanas ever known to man. This revealed to him his great purpose in life:

I have certainly become aware of the purpose of my life and, at the same time, I have a definite mission which is twofold. One is to become the means of alleviating the deep-rooted sufferings of mankind. The other is to be one with the highest reality that is ever existent.

God’s will

Sri Swamiji went on to achieve even greater yogic attainments in Rikhhia; nevertheless, years later he openly declared



Bihar School of Yoga, 1963



Bihar School of Yoga, 1963



The eternal flame, 1964



Inauguration of BSY, 1964



International Yoga Convention, Munger, 1965



Bihar School of Yoga, 1966



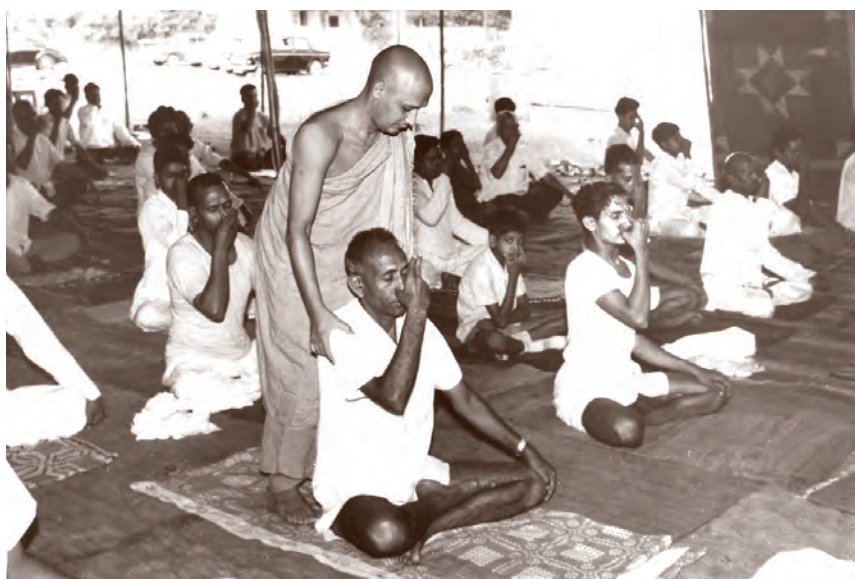
International Teacher Training Course, 1967



TTC at Ananda Bhavan (now Paduka Darshan), 1967



Bihar School of Yoga, 1967



Yoga training at BSY, 1969



Sannyasa Training, 1971-73



Golden Jubilee Yoga Convention, 1973



Bihar School of Yoga, 1977



Karna Chaura, 1978



First constructions at Ganga Darshan, 1978



Ganga Darshan, 1978

that he could not take credit for any of the things he had done in life: the decision to leave his family and go to Rishikesh, the mission he received from Swami Sivananda to spread yoga from shore to shore, the work he undertook to manifest the mission, even the people he met on his world travels. He shared the astounding realization that from time to time he may have believed that he possessed exceptional vairagya and was driven by a personal quest for spiritual truth; however, the real truth was that God alone had determined his every action and deed.

In his final years, though he continued to celebrate yoga as the mightiest culture of the modern day, he rarely made reference to the major role he had played in its success, or the fact that he had brought about the great yogic revolution. If he spoke of yoga, it was in terms of guiding people to calm and purify their mind so that they could hear the voice of God for themselves. Devotees and disciples continued to sing his praises, but Sri Swamiji saw himself simply as God's humble servant, performing the duties expected of him:

You should understand that the work Bihar School of Yoga has done is not an outcome of my intelligence or my efforts. It is not an outcome of my experience or of anything that belongs to me. It is because of His instructions and the guidance which He whispers to me from time to time . . . Every now and then my soul opens, and I find Him there and He tells me what to do. I do not know how to open myself to His presence; I cannot do it, it happens by itself. Some mornings or evenings my spirit opens and he is there. He tells me what to do.

Swami Niranjanananda at the helm

I do not want a disciple; I want a sacrificial goat for offering. I have come with a mission for which I want a disciple as strong as steel, one who would not be purchased by money or women, name or attachment, but one who is the master of all these. He alone will be my chief disciple who is beyond birth,

death and greed, who is fearless, indifferent to social prestige and unaffected by any influences. I do not want excuses. Whatever happens, what I say must come true.

—Swami Satyananda

When Sri Swamiji left Munger in 1988, he was confident that the ashram and all its affiliated enterprises would flourish under the capable guidance of Swami Niranjanananda. Twenty-five years later, the Bihar School of Yoga and the Satyananda Yoga movement are living testimonies to Swami Niranjan's sterling accomplishment. Ganga Darshan stands as one of the few ashrams in the world that has consistently remained committed to the yogic tradition, yet catering to the needs of hundreds of people within its premises at a time. BSY remains a world leader in the propagation of yogic sciences, and continues to draw serious students, seekers and aspirants from all over the world for its classes, courses and training programs. Sri Swamiji's exalted vision is more broad-reaching than ever, and it continues to dynamically expand and evolve to meet the changing needs of the world's citizens.

With Swami Niranjanananda at the helm of Ganga Darshan, a great number of changes took place at BSY, both on the administrative level and within the various departments of the ashram, bringing the ashram in line with the technology and communication methods of a progressing world. He also established standards for yoga teaching and training in the many centres and ashrams around the world, preserving the style and methodology that typifies Satyananda Yoga. At a time when there was increasing pressure to glamorize and commercialize the yoga movement, Swami Niranjanananda has remain steadfast to the purity and authenticity of the tradition as presented by Sri Swamiji, while being responsive to the needs of the day. Such commitment, insight and wisdom have ensured that Satyananda Yoga has endured the test of time and continues to be a living, dynamic tradition.

Bihar Yoga Bharati

In 1994, Swami Niranjanananda fulfilled the wishes of both Sri Swamiji and Swami Sivananda and officially established the Bihar Yoga Bharati (BYB), the world's first academically sanctioned yoga university, at Ganga Darshan. BYB offers students the highest quality gurukul education, earning certificates and advanced degrees in applied yogic sciences, yoga pedagogy, yoga ecology, yogic studies, health management and yogic lifestyles. Not merely an academic pursuit, these courses offer the rare opportunity for students to imbibe the teaching of the ancient sages in an environment that provides a complementary yogic lifestyle and a practical means of applying it to everyday life.

Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal

A bal yogi himself, Swami Niranjanananda perfectly illustrates the benefits yoga offers when introduced during early childhood. When a small group of local children personally approached him for yoga lessons in 1995, he seized the opportunity to demonstrate tangibly that when children grow and learn in a yogic environment they become happy, healthy, positive, contributing members of society. After training the first batch of children in yogasana, pranayama, kirtan and Sanskrit chanting, Swami Niranjan gave them the direction to teach other children. What resulted is the Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal (BYMM), the world's largest yoga organization run by children for children.

The children of BYMM are the administrators, teachers, students, managers and research scientists of this massive organization, which has hundreds of branches throughout India and thousands of active members. In a study of the effects of yoga in schools, the children put together one of the most extensive reports on the subject ever conducted, which provides conclusive evidence that children who practise even a minimum of yoga are overall happier, better students. One need only attend one of the many programs held at Ganga Darshan to witness the amazing results of

this endeavour; the BYMM children of Munger, thousands strong, are responsible for practically every aspect of crowd control, prasad distribution and security during the events, and they skilfully lead the massive crowds in the chanting of sophisticated mantras and kirtans. These children shine hope for the future with their remarkable yogic attainments.

Yoga Publications Trust

I suggest a small booklet that is very simple, not at all conclusive or complete. The purpose of this book is to introduce yourself, as well as the subject, to people . . . The book is only a kind of communication between you and the person whom you have met once in your life. Now your work can begin from here . . .

—Swami Satyananda

The compiling and printing of yogic textbooks and literature had been a major part of Sri Swamiji's mission right from the start. As the work expanded, so did his efforts to provide a wide range of comprehensive publications shedding a new light on the ancient yogic teachings and practices. Swami Niranjanananda's work in this area has been unprecedented and the number of published texts that have come out of BSY since the late 1980s has been humbling. To bring a greater sense of order to the publishing, printing and distribution of these books, he created the Yoga Publications Trust (YPT) in 2000, responsible for disseminating the hundreds of textbooks, magazines, research materials, audio and video recordings, nationally and internationally. The standardized design, printing and binding of the books ensures that all of the literary and periodical material that comes out of BSY is recognized internationally with the symbol of quality and consistency.

In the short span of twenty-five years, Swami Niranjanananda authored over eighty books, rendering the ancient tantric, vedantic and upanishadic texts easily accessible and practical learning tools for the modern aspirant. His satsangs

and lectures have been meticulously compiled into several book series. In the lead to the World Yoga Convention 2013, Swami Niranjanananda provided a new impetus to the publishing efforts, with more than a hundred new publications in the offing. His efforts and work to honour the teachings of Sri Swamiji and Swami Sivananda have been the most impressive literary offerings, for these books present the most comprehensive and reliable collection of the wisdom of these two great world masters.

YPT has built itself a reputation for publishing the world's finest yogic texts, which are used with high regard by universities, colleges and medical schools everywhere. These books remain unparalleled for their accessibility and comprehensiveness. Many of the more well known books such as *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* and *A Systematic Course in the Ancient Tantric Techniques of Yoga and Kriya* have remained on the bestseller list for decades. With the widespread demand for the teachings, several of the books have been translated to reach as wide a readership as possible. YPT books are published in most European languages, Russian, Japanese, Mandarin, Korean, Urdu and Farsi.

Jignasu sannyasa

During Sri Swamiji's early years as a guru, he initiated many people into sannyasa, with the clear understanding that not everyone would be able to maintain the rigours of the lifestyle. His purpose at that time had been to ignite a yogic revolution, and despite the many people who eventually abandoned the guru robes, more stayed on to become shining examples of the possibilities sannyasa offers in the contemporary age.

As times changed and spiritual life gained a legitimate place in the world, Swami Niranjan began to see the need for a more gradual introduction into the sannyasa lifestyle and established *jignasu sannyasa*, the path of the seeker. A *jignasu* may or may not fully adopt the sannyasa lifestyle,

but by wearing the yellow cloth and establishing oneself in a yogic lifestyle, powerful samskaras are formed for one's spiritual future. Combined with Sri Swamiji's karma sannyasa initiation, the Satyananda tradition offers the spiritual seeker a step-by-step path to evolve spiritually that allows for natural life transitions.

Yoga capsules

As an example of Swami Niranjana's perception, intuition and foresight into the current needs of individuals living in society, he developed a selection of 'yoga capsules' that provide doses of yoga sadhana that can be easily integrated into a busy schedule. With a combination of mantra chanting, simple asana and pranayama practices, yoga nidra, self-study and meditation, these yoga capsules enable everyone, regardless of their social and time restrictions, to experience the healing benefits of an integrated yogic lifestyle. The yoga capsules together provide a balanced practice that addresses the needs of the head, heart and hands.

In addition to the yoga capsules, Swami Niranjana organized the development of yogic management concepts with several major corporations in India, and later these ideas were introduced into the workforce. The teachings offered are not limited to physical exercises; instead, they embrace a concept of yoga that promotes the awakening and expansion of the total personality. Swami Niranjana continues to encourage and develop innovative ways to keep yoga moving 'from door to door and shore to shore.'

Vision and mission of guru

Sri Swamiji always proclaimed yoga to be a mighty world culture, and he sought to deliver evidence of this by way of archaeological research findings in Colombia, Scandinavia and the United Kingdom. The revival of yoga, though it began in India, occurred globally due to the universal language and nature of yoga, transcending personal, cultural and international barriers.

There is abundant evidence in the ancient cultures demonstrating that the people were not ignorant of yogic philosophy. In several ancient civilizations, remnants of yoga in the form of statues, figurines, engravings, drawings and paintings depict the practices of asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha. It is only due to the ravages of time, with shifts in political and social structures, that the culture of yoga disappeared from most of the world's civilizations and cultures. Fortunately, due to the dedicated work of sannyasins, yoga remained intact in India. Through millennia of war and struggle, the wisdom was preserved; thus, yoga remained a part of the Indian people's rich spiritual heritage.

Much of the history of yoga was shrouded in mystery, and very few people had the ability to decipher the meaning behind the deep ancient wisdom. It was not until the late part of the nineteenth century that yoga started to be revealed to the masses. The work of early pioneers like Swami Vivekananda brought the teachings of yoga to the light of day. It was not until the 1940s that yoga received widespread attention and respect, and this was almost solely due to the effort and genius of Swami Sivananda. A medical doctor, eminent scholar and humble servant to all, he embodied the riches of the yogic teachings and provided extensive and thoughtful interpretations of practices and texts, which gave yoga a place in the contemporary world.

Yoga withstood the tests of time to emerge at a point in history when humankind needed it most. The global renaissance of yoga, the rebirth of yoga as a worldwide culture, began with Swami Sivananda's efforts. Through the establishment of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement, the Bihar School of Yoga, the many ashrams and yoga centres, thousands of teachers and guides, a library of literature and the spirit of faith, which infused all his endeavours, Swami Satyananda made certain that yoga did not fade back into a distant memory. Swami Niranjanananda now continues the rich heritage handed down by these

luminaries. It is the mission of the Bihar School of Yoga and the Satyananda Yoga movement to ensure that future generations have access to the treasure of yoga for greater awareness, peace, health and harmony, as per the teachings lovingly offered by the gurus of the lineage.

A guru may leave his body, but he will continue to live in the heart of every disciple. His spirit lives forever if the disciple can remain in tune with him. Then he guides him at all times, in thought and emotion and in actual life. I do not feel that I have done anything, because my simple philosophy is that everything is an expression of guru's will. If you are a disciple, you should be dedicated and devoted to your guru, and should direct your effort and endeavour to carrying out and furthering his work, whatever it may be. In my life, I have accomplished what I set out to do by the grace of my guru.

—Swami Satyananda

Part 3

The Vision of a Sage

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

6

What is Yoga?

YOGA is a science and a practice

Yoga is not a fad. Yoga is not charlatanry. Stopping the heartbeat or lying buried underground is not yoga. Yoga has nothing to do with seclusion. Yoga is knowledge, not miracles, witchcraft or superstition. Yoga is a rational science. Yoga is a practical science. In fact, the number of books on yoga runs into the thousands and the list grows with every year that passes. For personal growth through yoga, however, it is not necessary to read any of these books, as yoga is one hundred percent practice. It is a system of techniques and practices related to the body, emotions and various stages of mind. There is nothing in any branch of yoga which is beyond reason and science. No doubt tremendous miracles can be performed with the help of yogic potentialities, but they themselves are not yoga. Yoga is a science which can be studied, practised, experienced, understood and explained by any educated and well-read person. Each individual can gain from this wonderful science according to his needs and learn to overcome his deficiencies.

Yoga is not concerned with cultivation of impossible virtues. We leave them to the moralists. Yoga is based on the rich experiences of yogis throughout the ages as well as modern scientific research. It has no restrictions; it is not a religion, it is pure science. At whatever stage of life you happen to be, whatever vocation you are immersed in, the

impact of yoga will invariably be felt as a direction towards a better, happier life. The science of yoga can give to man the knowledge of himself. Not an intellectual understanding but the realization that when all else fails him in life, the light of the Self will illumine his way. Although yoga is a subject based purely on the objective sciences, it touches every aspect of the individual personality including your emotional life, your way of thinking and the solutions you are seeking in your personal and professional life. The field is vast and inviting.

YOGA is evolution of consciousness

The ultimate purpose of yoga is to evolve the superman in man, to express the mind behind the mind, because our present state of consciousness is very limited. Behind this body, behind this mind, behind this external, empirical consciousness, there is a higher and greater consciousness in you and that consciousness is known by various names. Some call it Self. Some call it superego. Some call it expansion of mind. The Upanishads called it atma.

The practices of tantra and yoga may or may not give you samadhi, the nirvikalpa state, the higher state, but one thing is certain, when you are practising yoga, the consciousness is evolving, and this evolution of consciousness will ultimately reflect upon the character of the whole world. Yoga has to do with an evolved state of mind. In the same way as you develop your body with nutritional foods, the practices of yoga can develop your mind from its present, gross state to a more subtle, refined level of being. It can help you resolve your conflicts in life, and it can also trigger the evolution of awareness.

Yoga is a system to unfurl a greater, mightier and more powerful consciousness in man. Yoga is a wonderful system through which you realize the various dimensions of your own consciousness, so much so that a time arises when you are able to transcend the very concept of consciousness, and the superconscious state manifests itself. Yoga is a

method by which you have absolute control, mastery and knowledge of all states of consciousness, of all the patterns of consciousness.

So, when I speak about yoga, I talk about a very definite process whereby an unequivocal change takes place in the sphere of human consciousness, and a distinct change manifests in the structure of the human brain and psyche. I talk about a yoga that aims at the evolution of consciousness, not at inflicting a little change. All the physical, psychological, psychosomatic and spiritual techniques by which we realize the deeper and greater faculties within our own personality are known as yoga.

Peace of mind is not the ultimate state of yoga. The ultimate is to realize your real being, the supreme consciousness. Yoga only deals with the development of human consciousness. Yoga talks about samskaras and states of consciousness. Yoga does not talk about sin or evil tendencies. If it did, then it would be the path of religion. If you practise yoga, you do not become free from hatred because yoga kills it, but because yoga improves the frame of your consciousness. It brings about certain changes in your physical grey matter or in your psychological framework.

At lower levels this consciousness expresses its innate nature as hatred, greed, and so on. In later development, this same consciousness expresses higher qualities such as love, compassion, selflessness, peace and tranquillity. In this way, it develops. This is the subject and practice of yoga.

YOGA is mastery of mind

Yoga is fundamentally a science of being in command of your mental functions just as you have control over a motor car. If you don't have control over your motor car it goes right and left and goes haywire. If you don't have control over your mind, you have mental and emotional breakdowns. Even when you go to a church, a temple, or to a guru, where is your mind? You say, "You are my father, you are my mother, you are my God," but you are thinking of something else all

the time, because you do not have knowledge of the forces of the mind.

If you cannot master the process of thought and feeling, you can gain nothing in this life. You will leave this world like billions of people before you have done; eat, drink, enjoy and die. Are you satisfied with that way of life? If you want to understand the deeper forces of life, the deeper forces of the mind, then yoga is meant for you. Through the practices of yoga, it is possible to awaken the dormant potential faculties of the mind and to evolve from the gross state to a higher subtle plane of consciousness. The purpose of yoga is to progressively remove existing restrictions and veils of the individual mind, to explore and unfold its inherent potential, and to gradually shape the individual mind into a perfect instrument and reflector of the cosmic mind of which it is a part.

The classical definition of yoga is to be able to hold complete mastery over all the dimensions of your mind. Yoga is a system, a technique for stilling the turbulence of the mind, for harnessing it and maintaining its resilience. I therefore use the word 'yoga' in the sense of a science that pertains to the whole concept of the mind. I do not merely mean hatha yoga, raja yoga or dhyana yoga, nor do I mean that only certain psychic experiences are yoga, for the aim of yoga, and all paths of yoga, is to go further and take a jump into the chasm of no mind, superconsciousness.

In yoga we deal with the most important part of our being, the mind. All the secrets of the universe are in the mind. It contains all knowledge that has existed, now exists and which will exist in the future. It has layer upon layer of expression from the most subtle to the most gross. It is this mind which stands as a barrier between myself and my Self. It is this mind through which contact will be made between the individual self and the inner Self.

Yoga is a method by which consciousness is disconnected from the entanglement with the mind and the manifested world. Experience of the difference and separation of pure

consciousness from the mind and body leads to realization of the oneness of all things and realization of the Self, the Absolute. All yoga paths and all yoga techniques utilize this process of removing limitations of the mind and body so that *jnana*, transcendental knowledge, can shine through in its full glory. Perfection of mind leads to spontaneous illumination of pure consciousness.

The final aim of yoga is nothing but the total destruction of the patterns of the manifestation of consciousness. A goldsmith prepares different ornaments out of gold which are known by different names and forms, but when these ornaments are destroyed or melted down, they become gold again. In the same manner, different things and structures come out of the mind and are variously named in the cosmic process of nature. The mind has to be divested of all its forms so that the consciousness remains nameless and formless.

YOGA is inner transformation

You can change the religion of a man but you cannot change the nature. This is the difficult change which mankind has failed to achieve. It is for this purpose that dharma, religions and philosophies were created. To change the nature of a man can take millions and millions of years by the natural process of evolution. The purpose of yoga is to initiate a movement of transformation so that the individual makes a departure from his innate nature.

A time has to come when man must transform his base of existence and activity. Rather than operating in this world through a narrow frame of mind, let him operate, let him live and think from a higher field of consciousness. We have lived for forty or sixty years, but what am I within and what are you within? We are all shrouded in clouds of darkness inside, while we live an enlightened and cultured life outside. How do you change yourself? To change the intellect only is not change. To change the emotional patterns is not change. You can behave as I want you to, but you will not change. Man cannot change unless an inner transformation takes

place and this transformation of one's inner being can never happen just through the mind.

How can you change yourself through the mind, and who is changing? Yoga says the transformation has to be effected on the very matter of the structure. How can you change matter? You cannot tackle the matter unless you do so in its scientific aspect. When matter becomes energy, that is transformation and that is change. When the 'I' becomes spiritually divine, that is transformation and that is change. That transformation can only happen through yoga because the practices of yoga bring about a transformation and a change in the basic structure of man.

YOGA is universal

It is true that there are certain prescriptions of yoga that are peculiar to Indian culture, such as vegetarian diet, meditation upon the *ishta*, the chosen form of God, recitation of mantras, and so on, but these do not make an inseparable barrier to adopting a yogic way of life. Giving up a non-vegetarian diet becomes necessary only at a certain stage of yoga where all heavy and rich foods have to be given up in favour of a simple, nutritious diet. Food plays an important role in one's life and it has to be regulated according to one's way of living. Smoking and drinking also have to be moderated if one wants to practise yoga. Adjustment and moderation of these things only form a preliminary part of yoga in order to help one to progress more easily. If you can drink and still practise meditation, smoke and still practise ajapa japā, you are welcome to, but you will find that it is not possible.

The system of yoga is designed for every sort of person, religious or not, disciplined or not, healthy or sick, Hindu or Christian, atheist or theist, with or without political belief or ideology. You may not even want the divine or higher or noble experience, you may just like to improve the condition of the body and mind, or you may just like to improve the mental power and energy. Yoga is designed for every type, every temperament and every kind of person.

Even if a person with the most selfish, criminal tendencies practises yoga, no matter what his intentions may be, his consciousness will evolve towards perfection much more quickly than if no practice is adopted. The higher faculties of consciousness and awareness will begin to operate and the personality will slowly change as defective conditioning and unpleasant habits are restructured in the brain.

If you want to renounce life and become a monk or a heretic or a recluse, there is a yoga for you. If you want to improve the creative intelligence of the mind, there is a yoga for you. If you want to improve your memory, your willpower or your capacity to work, create, discover or innovate, there is a yoga for you. You may just want to be a very good householder, a good husband or an ideal wife, or maybe you want peace, amity, tranquillity, purity and understanding in your family; there is a yoga for you.

Religions and cultures differ. A Christian, a Mohammedan, a Jew, all can practise yoga. Except for an agnostic or an atheist, everyone has a vision of the ideal supreme. *Rama* or *So-Ham* are not the only fundamental mantras. One can say 'Allah' or 'Hail Mary' as well. In meditation practice, just as we have Krishna consciousness, there is also Christ consciousness and Absolute consciousness. It is not the ultimate which varies, but the mode of apprehension. Yoga is a universal recipe.

YOGA is integration of the human personality

A few decades ago we were taught that yoga was meant for people who had renounced life, but now the picture has changed entirely. We now know that yoga is related with each and every item of your personality. Yoga is related to your body and its laws; that is one aspect of yoga. The second aspect is related to your feelings and behaviour, mind and thinking. Later, yoga related to your emotion, then to your concept and philosophy of life. Finally, yoga is related to your mystical consciousness. So, do not say that yoga is only for self-restraint or for God-realization, or that yoga is only

connected with mystical consciousness. Maybe it is, but that is only one form of yoga. There are other forms whereby you can influence the body, the nervous system, hormones, etc.

The practicality of this science is intended to develop an integrated personality. Ultimately, yoga is a means to manifest the innate, latent potentialities in every man and a method by which one can overcome all the limitations of life. Remember, the knowledge of yoga was imparted by Lord Krishna to Arjuna right in the midst of a battlefield. It was not given to a sannyasin, but to a person who was engaged in the world, a warrior who was confused with the problem of right and wrong. Thus you will see that yoga does not mean performing a few asanas or pranayamas, although these are important, nor is it meant for sannyasins only. It is much more for the man of the world faced with the day-to-day problems and realities of life. Yoga is the complete science of man's mental, physical, emotional and spiritual personality. All the techniques of yoga aim at the negation of errors in the personality and the emergence of a strong, pure individual. So, in short, yoga is a science for the integration and development of the total personality.

In yoga, we have various branches which deal with all these aspects of the personality. All the yogas are broadly classified into five main branches known as hatha yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga and jnana yoga. Then, within these five main branches you have other forms of yoga, such as kundalini yoga, kriya yoga, laya yoga, nada yoga, swara yoga, mantra yoga, etc. These five broad forms of yoga are related to the body, mind, intellect, emotions, passions, actions, interactions, manifestations and expressions. If these capacities or elements of your personality are not progressing, not improving and not evolving systematically, then there will be a lopsided development. Man should not be all intellect or all emotion. There should be a happy blending of both; otherwise, he will have no peace in life. Therefore, it is advisable to have a synthesis of all the forms of yoga to integrate the

personality. Even as you need different vitamins for the normal development of the various organs of your body, in the same way you need a synthesis of all the forms of yoga.

YOGA is freedom through inner discipline

Yoga is primarily a science of disciplining the body, mind, emotion and intellect. Yoga believes in hard work, an alert and disciplined mind and a balanced personality. The first principle is that yoga is a science of discipline. The second is that yoga is total control over the tendencies of the mind. The third is that by yoga you become aware of your inner being. The fourth is that by becoming aware of your inner being you become free from the day-to-day turmoil that makes you move like a shuttlecock from one end to the other, or like a boat on the ocean. This is the yoga to practise, to discuss, to understand and to learn, so that everything you do is creative, not destructive.

Inner discipline is very important, not only for enlightenment, but also for the survival of humanity. We should not underestimate the value of discipline for the survival of the family, of the nation, of the government, of humanity. For greater accomplishment, for inner knowledge, for higher enlightenment and for happiness inside and outside, inner discipline is necessary and yoga talks about this.

In yoga, the discipline is grown as you grow flowers, from the seed state to the blossoming state. Discipline is grown, it is perfected; it becomes a part of your thinking, of your feeling, of your living. It becomes a part of your interaction with your friends, with your enemies, with the people who are good and who are not good. Therefore, we talk about yoga in the light of this inner discipline.

By following the path of yoga, one day you will become a true soldier. You will defeat your inner enemies and achieve real freedom. You are not liberated now because you are not your own master. You get easily swayed by emotions and passions, anger and worries. You are not able to endure pain and sorrow, and you become easily frustrated by difficulties.

Neither are you able to rule your thoughts nor command your actions. You are enslaved by your own mind. You will have to reverse this situation and attain mastery over it through the practices of yoga.

YOGA is the way to release samskaras

Yoga does not make a man good on an intellectual or emotional plane. Yoga changes the pattern of your thinking and the way of reasoning about things that affect your life. It completely overhauls the totality of your personality, the nucleus of your existence. It purges your *karmas*, or powerful subconscious impressions that condition your thoughts and experiences, which have been with you for a very long time and compel you to act in certain ways. They lie at the very source of your behaviour.

Yoga removes the deep-rooted conflicts from the depths of the human mind, its known and unknown realms, and the powerful, dormant unconscious. Yoga will liberate you from the shackles that bind. Through yoga you can fathom the unconscious and remove layer after layer of samskaras which hold you back and come in the way of your natural self-expression. When these samskaras go, power and wisdom that lie dormant within begin to manifest.

In order to change every sphere of your social, political, economic, physical, mental and spiritual existence, it is necessary for us to thoroughly re-orient the man that has evolved within you. All forms of yoga, hatha yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga, karma yoga, jnana yoga, kundalini or laya yoga, have just one purpose, and that is to train the animal instincts in man, to rend them asunder and evolve a new spiritual personality.

YOGA is esoteric and exoteric

Basically, there are two forms of yoga known as esoteric and exoteric yoga. There are certain yoga practices which are directly linked with the body, mind, emotions and intellect. These practices, which are related to the external side of

man, can be known as exoteric yoga. This form of yoga has become very popular with the young people of the world today because there are thousands of teachers in every part of the world who are engaged in teaching this exoteric system, all for the betterment of mankind. This system of yoga is very easy and at the same time it has no spiritual or occult significance. There are millions of people in the world who do not care for the mystic life, for mystic experience or for spiritual life; what they need is a healthy body and a mind which can cope with the stresses.

There is another form of yoga known as esoteric yoga, or the yoga of spiritual life. This system of yoga is meant for a few people who are really qualified to take the spiritual path. Therefore, esoteric yoga is not taught by teachers, but it is taught by the guru himself to a disciple. Of course, according to the traditional system of yoga, exoteric yoga is the preliminary path and esoteric yoga is the higher path, but in essence, both are connected and interdependent.

YOGA is individual improvement

Yoga, by its philosophy and nature, is individualistic. It is not a social ideology. It is not a group ideology. It is out-and-out individualistic: I practise, I improve; you practise, you improve. Society can influence the individual, true, but individuals can and do create society. An individual is the centre of society. We can say that yoga influences the social structure by helping the individual to evolve. Individuals constitute society and the welfare of the society is determined by the wellbeing of the individuals, and yoga is certainly the blueprint of individual perfection. If we just make yoga a social philosophy, then it becomes an institution or organization like many religions have become, but if we direct yoga to the individual, then individuals will evolve. Later on, this individual can create his society. After all, it has happened in history. It is one man who leads the society. In this way, if thousands of people all over the world undergo the experience of evolution, then whole communities will

definitely be influenced by yoga. In this particular respect, yoga has been very clear: keep it individualistic because the individual has to improve.

Today, it is the task of medical scientists, psychologists, sociologists, educators and others dealing with social affairs to introduce yoga into the scheme of modern life. In this way, the different intellectual strata of society can assimilate yoga. It must be made known to all that the science of yoga has great physiological and psychological potential, and can be effectively utilized as a therapy and a means of total self-improvement and regeneration of society. It is essential to explain the theory and practice of yoga in unambiguous terms to everyone, and then leave it up to individuals to adopt what is suitable for them.

YOGA is a system of health

Yoga is a down-to-earth and practical system of physical and mental health, therefore people who have their own professional life will benefit greatly from yoga. Today, in everybody's life there is a lot of stress, and on account of this, there are a lot of mental and physical sufferings. People who believe in yoga come from every section of society. You may be an ordinary worker in the factory, a doctor, a cleaner, a sportsman or a scientist, a philosopher or an industrial magnate. Yoga is useful for everyone for physical, mental and emotional health. Every year, more and more people are turning to the practices of yoga as the scientists are advocating them.

Yoga is a system of physical and mental health. It is a system of useful techniques that are to be practised regularly, every day. These practices are sometimes physical, sometimes mental and sometimes spiritual. If, for example, one is suffering from asthma, then one is taught to practise certain techniques every day, which include cleansing techniques, physical postures and breathing techniques. If someone is suffering from high blood pressure or coronary problems then they are taught the techniques of relaxation, pranayama

and concentration. In this way, we have various techniques in yoga which make it a practical system of disciplining and correcting the errors in the body and mind. Once these errors are corrected, then yoga becomes a way to understand oneself.

YOGA is asana, pranayama, relaxation and meditation

What does yoga mean? It means physical postures, breathing exercises, relaxation and meditation; these are the four sections of yoga. One is for the physical body, the second is for the life force, the third is for relaxation, and the fourth one is meditation.

The first section is called physical postures, *hatha yogasana*. By holding a particular physical posture, your glands are influenced. There are many glands in your body which have a great role to play in your health: thyroid gland, thymus gland, adrenals, pancreas, and so on, and if there is an imbalance, physical and mental diseases take place. You must have seen the little boys and girls that suffer from epileptic fits; that is due to glandular imbalance. By the practice of these yogasana you can bring about a balance in the glandular secretions. By yogasana many, many diseases can be completely cured; it is a very effective system.

The second section is known as *pranayama*, which means yoga techniques which utilize the breathing process to balance and expand the life force, the *prana*. This body is living on life force; if there is less of it we become weak. Therefore in order to have more life force in the body you must do the practice of pranayama.

The third section is relaxation and this is very important for everyone, for the doctors, engineers, businessman, housewives, politicians, whose minds are under constant strain. In yoga there is a system of relaxation called *yoga nidra*. You do not sleep, you just lie down and do the practice mentally and you will find that within ten minutes you are relaxed. You have to learn this art.

The fourth section is meditation; how to concentrate the mind and make it steady and one-pointed. When you

pray, your mind is not steady. When you go to the sanctum sanctorum, your mind is wandering. Meditation teaches you how to concentrate your mind on one point, and once you learn how to meditate you learn the art of life. When the mind is scattered it is incapable, but when the same mind is concentrated by meditation practice it becomes powerful. The most difficult thing in life is meditation, but once you know how to concentrate, once you know how to practise for meditation, you are fortunate.

YOGA is a blueprint for perfection

You can consider yoga from four standpoints: as a philosophy, a science, a program, and a method. As a philosophy, yoga needs reconsideration more than revival. Yoga is another side of Samkhya. However, we need a fresh approach to yoga philosophy based on Samkhya, because much that is written about yoga is covered by the personal preferences of *advaita vada*, the philosophy of non-dualism.

As a science, yoga can be tested and proven. It is not a matter of faith. For example, if you practise pranayama, it influences your brain and nervous system. Yoga is scientific and a lot of research work has already been done in India and abroad. Yoga is a program as far as it assumes the shape of a movement with definite aims and objectives.

Yoga is a method in the sense that yogic techniques are methodical and pure. Whatever your spiritual orientation may be, yoga can always be very useful. Few methods of self-realization are as universally valid and practical as yoga. I am tempted to say that yoga is a blueprint for perfection and the only *modus operandi* for self-realization.

Yoga is not a direct method of emancipation, *mukti* or *nirvana*, but by yoga you do evolve. The practice of yoga transforms a rank pessimist into a robust optimist; one becomes a king unto himself. There is no way other than yoga by which you develop a higher dimension of consciousness, a kind of inner eye, *antar drishti*, by which you then proceed further towards *moksha*.

YOGA is union

Yoga literally means ‘union, joining, togetherness’, two things becoming one, three things becoming one, a number of things becoming one. Multiplicity or diversity fusing into unity is the process of yoga. The word ‘yoga’ means communion, merger or, much better, fusion. It should be explained that yoga means a process of reintegration of the lower consciousness with the higher and mightier consciousness in man. Your small consciousness, your limited consciousness, your empirical consciousness joins universal consciousness, absolute consciousness and becomes one with that. That is yoga. Your little mind, your little ego, your little consciousness, finds it very difficult to conceive, to think of or to visualize the universal consciousness. You represent individual consciousness or the limited or exoteric consciousness. When you try to withdraw your mind and your consciousness from objective, external experience and make it internal, then yoga begins.

Therefore, all the practices of yoga tend to develop that state of mind, and that state of body in which you are able to practise concentration, meditation, one-pointedness and complete integration with the higher Self. Even as rivers flow into and become one with the ocean, in the same way, this human being with his small mind, narrow consciousness, and limited awareness has been suffering very much. By the practice of yoga you try to fuse your lower consciousness, your limited consciousness with unlimited and infinite consciousness, to become happy, peaceful and full of knowledge. Yoga is a method the conscious mind uses to commune with the superconsciousness, that underlying fundamental consciousness in man: the supreme state, the supreme intelligence, or God.

In yoga there are many hundreds of methods of ‘going in’ to inner awareness from external awareness, the realm of gross experience and outer perceptions. The choice depends upon temperament, capacities, limitations, comprehension and the amount of effort put into the practices. The reason

for so many methods is to accommodate all the different kinds of minds. These different techniques one should know and understand.

YOGA is realization of the Self

In the olden days, yoga was used to improve and develop the inner spirit of man. Our ancestors believed that without the enlightenment of consciousness, a human being could not improve, and therefore it was very necessary that everyone should know their own Self.

The purpose of yoga is to know our centre. The body, mind, intellect and emotions, as far as we know them, are our peripheral entity. They are not the real Self and since we are far from the vision of that inner being, we are incomplete. Therefore, in that incompleteness, we experience pain, agony, frustration, fear, meaninglessness and a sense of futility. All the problems we experience in everyday life related to our job, family, business and friends are because of that incompleteness. If we are able to get to the source of ourselves then we will experience completeness. That completeness is bliss or *anandam*. That completeness is an eternal and perennial joy which no problem of life can destroy. The science of yoga is one of the most outstanding paths for attaining this purpose.

The ultimate purpose of yoga is to experience oneself in the purest state. Now, we do not know ourselves in the purest state. What we know about ourselves is all mixed up. We know ourselves in terms of 'I am a Christian,' 'I am a Hindu,' 'I am a man,' 'I am a woman,' 'I am a tall man,' 'My name is this, my name is that,' 'I am an MA, I am a BA,' 'I am a manufacturer,' 'I am a businessman'. We know ourselves in terms of all these things, which is a kind of confused knowledge. We have to dissociate from all these types of knowledge and gradually understand ourselves as we are.

When we use the word 'yoga' we always mean a path that brings us nearer to our spirit. When we say *jnana yoga* we mean the way of union through the path of enquiry.

Raja yoga means the way of union by the process of esoteric realization; *bhakti yoga*, a path of union through devotion. Similarly, *karma yoga*, *kundalini yoga*, *swara yoga*, *nada yoga*, *tantra* and *mantra yoga* are the different paths by which we arrive at the point; just like in a circle we travel through the radii to the point.

There are many paths, but I have discovered for myself and also for the people of my generation, that the path of yoga is the most suitable one because the science of yoga originates from tantra. Tantra is a science which says that in order to reach the inner source of your being, you do not have to make any external change in your life. You do not have to be religious; you do not have to be a puritan, a monk, a celibate or a priest. Even a rank materialist, an atheist, an agnostic, or a hedonist can experience his inner being. This is the primary philosophy of tantra. You have to expand your mind, and expansion of mind is possible through the practices of yoga. These practices are contained in *hatha yoga*, *raja yoga*, *bhakti yoga* and *karma yoga*. A combination, synthesis or graduated practice of all these yogas will bring you closer to the experience of that reality.

Therefore, when Socrates said ‘Know Thyself’, he meant try to realize the centre of your personality. The Self which Socrates talked about is nameless, it is formless. It is in you, but it is universal, it has no limitation. What is its form? Is it light? Is it sound? Is it knowledge? Well, you have to find out for yourself. Human life has been given to you for that purpose. When the great saint Ramana Maharshi said, “Think, ‘Who am I?’” what he meant was, try to realize the centre of your personality. Many great men have been saying this from time to time. Thus, you should try to strive to realize and understand, both theoretically and practically, this higher aim of yoga. When you want to make the consciousness free from its limitations, the only method is yoga. This method is the yoga of meditation, *dhyana*, but it should be translated as the ‘science of Self-awareness’.

The purpose of human life is to know the Self. There is no other path and there is no other way by which you will be able to experience your own consciousness. I should repeat it again. The purpose of human life is to realize the Self and the purpose of yoga is to help you to realize the Self.

YOGA is an inner experience

Yoga talks about the body, the emotions and the psyche, and suggests a system of practices. However, ultimately, yoga believes that these forms of yoga are disciplining your body, mind and emotions, so that you may be able to accomplish that innermost experience for which man is born. In fact, the main hypothesis of yoga is that what you are seeking in your life is not outside, but inside you, within you. You need peace of mind? Search it out from within yourself.

You want to be happy? Realize it within yourself. Happiness and unhappiness, both are expressions of your mind. When your mind is unrestrained you are unhappy, when your mind has a lot of turbulence you are unhappy; but when you control and concentrate your mind, you can experience inner happiness. In all the forms of yoga, there is one process involved. You can practise any yoga from any teacher, any guru or any sect, yet only one process is involved. When your mind has withdrawn for some time from external objects to an internal object, that is the process of yoga.

In yoga, all the experiences take place within you and through you, and the whole process is spontaneous and non-intellectual. It is not necessary to introspect when you practise meditation or kundalini yoga, your karmas automatically manifest in symbolic form. All that is deeply embedded in your personality comes to the surface and thus you are able to behold your own nature. For example, when you practise antar mouna, you introspect on the sensory experiences. Gradually, you stop all the processes of sensation in total as you travel from the outer to the innermost structures of the mind. The yogic techniques of introspection provide a systematic method in which you

do not have to rely on anybody else; you are the guide and practitioner both.

YOGA is the reality behind appearances

Yoga is a science as far as method is concerned, but the truth of yoga goes beyond the realm of science. The ultimate point of yoga is the realization of unconditioned reality. Yoga is dealing with subjective reality, which is no less real than objective reality. The subjective reality can be understood by every individual according to their evolutionary maturity, but ultimately every individual must themselves experience the ultimate state of absolute reality, must know the Self, the ultimate point of yoga.

Yoga is an attempt and an effort to search for the reality behind the appearance. It is a state where you are united and have become attuned with the real existence. We talk about higher transcendental things, but we don't know. Talking about transcendental matters is one thing; understanding, experiencing and knowing transcendental matters is a completely different thing. When we know matter we know creation, but what about the experience within us?

There are two distinct events in creation. One is called reality and the other is called appearance. This body is appearance. Your external form is an appearance. Matter is an appearance, but what is reality? This reality is something that no one knows about. This reality is not an intellectual philosophy. This reality is not what is written in the books and you cannot get it from a teacher, or even a guru. This reality is a matter of your personal experience and your personal, first-hand knowledge. Yoga tries to serve this reality. In order to experience and understand this reality you will have to go into yourself, and yoga is the means to do this. The reality behind the appearance may be God, it may be Purusha, it may be nothing, it may be anything, but you must have personal knowledge of it.

The process and practices of yoga are concerned with *viiyoga*, separating Purusha from Prakriti, the seer from

the seen; that is, separating awareness from identification with the mind-body vehicle. This separation and difference between awareness and the mind-body can only be understood by personal experience. No amount of reading or talking will convince one of the truth and reality of this difference; only personal, overwhelming, staggering experience. This personal experience will transform one's life; it will provide a platform on which to reassess and understand one's entire life, one's entire existence. One will see a new dimension, never before suspected, in one's own being. This leads to yoga, union, nirvana, enlightenment. Enlightenment, that is the prime purpose of yoga and for that purpose we practise it. That is the definition of yoga.

YOGA is equanimity

Do you enjoy a happy and harmonious home life? Are you afire with enthusiasm in your day-to-day activities? When adverse circumstances squash and suppress you, do you rise above them with a cool head and an easy assurance? If so, you are a yogi. Yoga means complete equanimity within yourself and with everybody else, with the vast nature and the whole cosmos. Yoga is complete acceptance of anything in life, whether pain or pleasure, defeat or victory, disease or death. Yoga brings about a complete understanding of the whole process of creation.

YOGA is simple living and high thinking

In the practice of yoga there is one particular aspect that is emphasized every time: simple living and high thinking. No matter who you are, you may be rich or poor, you may be a big factory owner or a labourer in the streets, you will have to simplify the whole process of living. Simple living is one of the most important ingredients in yoga. Complicated living contributes to hypertension. Complicated living creates a lot of distress in the emotional personality, but in order to live a simple life you should have a very simple mind as well.

YOGA is a mighty world culture

Yoga should be given, not for the sake of yoga, but for the sake of the human being. Yoga is a way to perfect bliss, *anandam*. What is the aim of yoga? Samadhi. What is the effect of meditation? Shanti. What is the effect of dharana? One-pointedness. What is the effect of pranayama? A good brain. What is the effect of asanas; a light and healthy body. What is the result of niyama? A system or science of life. What is the effect of yama? Breaking down the complications in life. Yoga is a science of therapy, a science of self-improvement and a way of discipline. Yoga is actually a science for mankind, for his body, mind and spiritual growth. Besides all this, however, yoga is a culture and every nation must have a culture.

Culture is the backbone of a nation. Races which had absolute power have disappeared from the face of the earth, leaving no traces behind them. Nations with military might have been destroyed. Countries with political cultures have failed, but a country with a culture based on yoga has eternal existence. It can survive through the vicissitudes of life, the accidents of history and the ravages of time.

Yoga is not a political matter; it is a science of man's inner personality. It is a subject which is sincere, earnest and great. Yoga can improve relations and create international goodwill. Yoga is beneficial for the individual and, at the same time, it is also beneficial for the whole of humanity because it is a science which has brought natures, cultures and boundaries together, and has brought time and space under one canopy.

Yoga is a mighty culture in the making, and very soon, it is going to direct the experiences, behaviour, thought and perception of mankind. Yoga is a way of life, a culture of tomorrow. In the coming times, yoga is going to direct the events of the world's history, and you have a definite role to play in this. It is up to you to accept this great science with love, with admiration, with hope and with sincerity.

7

The Yogic Renaissance has Begun

*People are now witnessing the dawning of a new era.
We shall see the day when the light of yoga becomes the
inspiration for all of us.*

1960s: DISCOVERING YOGA

A new era

A spiritual revolution has already taken place and the industrial revolution is now ending. I am witnessing it with my own eyes, I see it in the classes, in the revival of the church, in the books that are being printed. I see it in the television programmes. Everywhere I find people with a spiritual tendency. I talk to them, I see their minds, I observe the way psychology is going. Thinkers like Aldous Huxley and many others are talking about a superman, a race of supermen and a new era, a time that is to come. So a revolution is evident.

Opening the doors of perception

For centuries many people thought yoga meant a life of renunciation, that it involved becoming a recluse, sleeping on beds of nails, drinking nitric acid, walking over fire or water, or that it was a religion. It was only with great difficulty that Swami Vivekananda, Swami Sivananda, and a few other great saints dispelled these ideas and brought yoga as a

science to everyone's door. Today, due to their efforts, people have begun to realize that yoga is a way of life, a system of discipline for all, whether one is religious or agnostic. Yoga is the one and only reality today. The doors to a new perception can be opened for everyone through yoga.

1970s: SEARCH FOR WHOLENESS

Young people lead the way

Yoga has started to flourish again after thousands of years of sleep, and it is flourishing because the wisdom of the present-day young people demands it. It is in the search for truth that young people have universally adopted yoga. They have discovered that yoga does not ask them to accept dogmas, slogans, or stereotyped ideas. It does not say that yoga is the only way to live your life and that other systems are completely wrong. It merely suggests techniques and then tells people to find out things for themselves. Yoga gives them a way of life that transcends national boundaries, something that people throughout history and large numbers of people today cannot understand.

Young people have taken up yoga to find their true nature and to find permanent happiness that transcends the transitory happiness given by sensual pleasures and so on. In yoga, they can see a complete way of life that tackles all the facets of man's being. They see that the techniques of asanas and pranayama give physical and mental health, the most basic step to achieving permanent happiness. How different this attitude is compared to the older generation who tend not to worry very much about the higher aspect of their being.

It is the young people who are leading the old on a positive path to mental peace, for they have universally adopted meditation and other yoga practices as being a necessary part of the daily routine. The younger generation has started to try to experience the truths inherent in all religions. They have not accepted nor have they rejected

religion. In fact, they have adopted a more scientific approach by trying to find the truth by practical methods. In this endeavour, they have taken to the techniques of yoga and have begun to appreciate its spiritual heritage.

Vital role in western countries

The word 'yoga' has become an international word and there is no land, there is no country and there are no people who are not intimately interested in this great science that is known as the science of yoga. When I started expounding yoga all over the world, I did not think that it would play such a vital role in the life of those who are civilized, who are normal, who are educated, who are cultured and have every means of living and enjoyment at their disposal, as people of western countries do. Today the condition is such that psychological abnormalities and problems have crept in with the advancement of civilization, taking the form of tensions, nervous breakdowns and neuroses. There is a strong possibility of removing them with the practices and the science of yoga.

A rejuvenating force

Many thousands of youths in advanced western nations are completely broken and damaged by the overuse of drugs, and live life with almost crippled or paralyzed brains. They are being rejuvenated and revitalized by the practices of yoga, even though the assistance of medical science is available to them. Furthermore, yoga programs given in mental asylums and prisons, as well as with spoilt children and with people who have underdeveloped brains, have shown that the systematic practice of yoga can bring a revival in the entire personality.

A personal experience

Until recently, the majority of people did not practise yoga although they retained a respect for it. For some, yoga meant the practice of hatha yoga. For others, it was just sitting down

quietly in a steady and tranquil position in dhyana. While for others, it was a life of mendicancy. Now, however, people coming from the West have personal experience of the good that yoga does. People in India have always known that yoga can lead the individual to freedom. It is not necessary to go to the heights of loneliness and rigours in the Himalayas. We do not have to abandon the normal and natural course of our life.

Source of inner strength

Today, in every part of the world, humankind is in a state of suffering. Every individual feels imprisoned within himself, defeated, dumbfounded, oppressed and bewildered. He wants to liberate himself from his limitations, his inner shackles, but he cannot. He has lost the fight even before he faces the din and roar of the battlefield. The science of yoga frees man from his self-defeat. It is a highly developed science of defence, containing a wide range of weapons that are limitless in their scope and application.

Until man is able to liberate himself from his inner shackles, he will never be able to breathe the air of real freedom. Our biggest enemy is our own limitations. In our ancient literature, these limitations were referred to as evil forces, devils and demons. By purifying ourselves through yoga, we can become like the general who controls and directs his own forces.

There is a growing awareness that through yoga we can also learn to command our willpower to overcome our limitations. We have certain inbuilt strengths of endurance, stability, poise, concentration and self-discipline. They are like the commanders of an army. When we know how to manipulate these inner strengths, then we can mobilize and gear them into achieving our desired objectives. In essence, this is man's true victory over himself. To light the extraneous forces, we must first develop the ability to conquer within.

Panacea for human life

Yoga has been handed down through the centuries. It is written in the *Bhagavad Gita* that Vivaswan passed this message onto Manu, then Manu spoke of it to Ikshavaku, and now I have passed it on to you. For some time, this science went underground and eventually it became unknown. Now, again, yoga has come forth throughout the world as a panacea for many physical and mental ills of human life and as a systematic course by which one can come close to one's own inner self.

Redefining yoga through research

For centuries, we have been led to believe that yoga is a path of renunciation, that yoga was meant for people who had renounced life, but now the picture has entirely changed. In order to correct this view I had to travel all over the world, meeting with doctors and scientists. Discussions were held on the different practices of asana, pranayama, mudras, bandhas, the system of yoga nidra, meditation and concentration.

Today we have come to the conclusion that the practice of yogasanas is not just physical exercise as we thought in the past. Pranayama is not just a breathing exercise, and meditation is not just closing your eyes and thinking about your religion or your God. It is much more than that. The practice of hatha yoga is an essential part of the purification of the body, and raja yoga consists of the practices of concentration and meditation. Raja yoga combined with hatha yoga is a complete science of self-healing. We have come to understand that yoga can fulfil our needs. It can help us to resolve our conflicts in life, and it can trigger the evolution of awareness. All over the world people are spending millions of dollars on yogic research into the mind and body because they know that it has the master-key for mankind's evolution, for helping him to move out of his present state of limitations and misery.

Part of the collective consciousness

The question arises: “Are we being indoctrinated into yoga?” Is yoga a new system, a new religion or a new philosophy?” The answer to this inquiry is a big ‘no’, for yoga is the universal inheritance of mankind. It is a culture that was known and practised by man in ancient times, perhaps more than forty centuries ago. During those times, the yogic culture existed throughout the whole world, but it was lost in the course of time, it died out.

Recently, however, yoga is coming back to life. The science of yoga is being revived. Lack of insight in man was the cause of the loss, or rather, the disappearance of this ancient yogic culture. It was put aside, hidden and forgotten. It was replaced by materialism, together with pleasure-seeking. Man wanted more and more possessions, wealth and status. This materialism has driven man and society to the edge of total collapse.

At this present time, when man is poised on the edge of this crumbling precipice, he is starting to think: ‘What have I done?’ and it is at this moment that he begins to search within himself and finds that his ancestors, yours and mine, had a way of life, a culture called ‘yoga’. We are starting to relive it again. It is nothing new. Neither brought nor implanted from outside, but something that is already in the collective consciousness of all humanity.

Preserving the science

Credit goes to India for preserving yoga in times of political upheaval and chaos. In India, the swamis and the sannyasins who wear the geru robe took a pledge, a *sankalpa*, that they would preserve the science of yoga in its entirety, even if the people of the world did not want it. That is why the tradition was created. This is not a Hindu order, a religious order, nor an Indian order. This is the tradition that dedicated itself to the preservation of higher sciences, the science of yoga, the Samkhya philosophy, because man must have this science. Otherwise, at any time, if political chaos takes grip

of a country, the whole culture is destroyed along with its spirituality. Therefore, in India some wise people separated the swamis and the mendicants from the society and offered to feed, clothe and sustain them, so they could maintain and preserve the higher values of life and so that in coming generations, if ever things became calm and smooth again, the sannyasins would be able to give this science of higher life back to the people.

For centuries and centuries, yoga was buried. Countries and cultures never knew what it was. Historians were completely ignorant of it. Finally, the day has come when there is peaceful administration, and law and order throughout the world. Therefore, the sannyasins have come out to give the science of yoga back to the people. However, if ever they find that the people do not want yoga, you will no longer see this robe in society. Therefore, all of you who wear this robe, whether householders or sannyasins, must remember that you bear a responsibility to carry the higher spiritual values of life, to love unity, to be at peace with others and with yourself, to be non-aggressive, silent, humble, grand and noble. This is what you have to be. This is not a social order.

A yogic culture

In recent years, we have been working on the possibility of creating a yogic culture on a greater scale. The whole of humanity, irrespective of affiliations to religion, language or nationality, can have one culture that is an expression of the spirit and inner attitude towards life and its problems. We have to understand the word 'culture' in relation to *sanskriti*, a process of *samskara*. What happens to a man when he is unhappy and suffering from anxiety and mental neurosis? It is because he has lost touch with the real culture within himself. His culture should encompass the greater aspect of human personality. It is not an intellectual, mental or emotional culture. It goes much deeper into the centre of man's existence. This is the concept of *sanskriti*.

1980s: YOGA AS THE GUIDING LIGHT

Penetrating every sphere of life

More than five thousand years ago, when Indian civilization was at its zenith, the people were faced with problems of the mind and psyche, of nervous imbalance and spiritual disharmony. At that time, they began to think about finding a way out, and so the science of yoga was revived in order to channelize man's mental, emotional and spiritual energies.

As modern life takes man progressively further from nature, he will have to come closer to yoga in order to compensate for his lost harmony. In fact, we are already witnessing a massive return to yoga, as people everywhere are looking for more constructive ways to use their time. Yesterday yoga was an unknown word, but today it is being practised by a significant proportion of the population, and its adherents are rapidly increasing. Yoga is beginning to penetrate every sphere of life and it will be a guiding light in man's spiritual quest.

Millions searching for inner self

People have reached a point where they have become aware that material life cannot be the ultimate form of life and that man has to follow an inner path, the path of yoga, not only for samadhi and realization, but also for physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. In the last twenty years or so, in every stratum of society, the spiritual influence on man's personality is being talked about everywhere.

Every year, millions of people come to India, thousands of people from Europe, thousands of people from Asia, millions of people from all over the world. What for? They don't come here for anything else except for one thing: they know that in India the gurus can tell them the way and the technique by which they can experience beyond the empirical self, beyond the outer self, beyond the object. From this, you can understand which way humanity is trying to go. In spite of technology, in spite of the modern culture

and civilization, and in spite of stark materialism, millions of people today are searching for their inner self through yoga.

Whether you are young or old, married or not, male or female, everyone has the capacity, everyone has the possibility, of having that deeper and abiding, higher and absolute experience. This experience is a part of the universal experience. It is a part of the cosmic experience. It is a part of the timeless and spaceless experience.

Yoga for all dimensions of life

Throughout the world, there is a resurgence of yoga in many fields of social life. Some people feel that when you practise yoga, you can relax very well. There are those who feel that if you practise yoga, you develop psychic powers like extrasensory perception, that you become intuitive and that your capabilities are enhanced. Others believe that through the practices of yoga the diseases such as blood pressure, insomnia, arthritis, rheumatism and peptic ulcer can be cured. In this way, people throughout the world have discovered one or more forms of yoga for themselves. If you see what they are doing, you find they are practising a few different techniques to cater to the different dimensions of their personality. People are beginning to understand that the physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, psychic and spiritual dimensions all assembled together are known as human life or human existence. They are beginning to analyze which yoga suits their needs.

Expansion of scientific perspective

Science has been studying yoga for some time. Earlier, yoga was understood as a philosophy and some sort of metaphysics was attributed to it, but when the travellers from the western countries came to India, they studied the science of yoga. When they went back to the West, they investigated it. Now, the picture of yoga is more or less complete, but it will take some more time to formulate the theory of yoga for the purpose of scientific utility. In fact, it also took

medical science centuries to establish itself. Therefore, you can understand why it is taking some time for yoga to be formulated. Scientists in the East and West are now engaged in deep research on the effects of various yogic sciences.

Important contributions

Yoga has brought something very important for man today. It says that the root cause of man's restlessness lies within himself. So far, people were attributing the cause of their suffering to the objective circumstances, but yoga has proved, by various studies, that the root cause is within one's own self. The second important thing which yoga has brought is that every person, whether he is a theist or an atheist, can grow in life and in spirit. This is something very important which yoga has contributed to the science of human growth. The third important thing that yoga has contributed is that, if you can concentrate your mind, you can influence the events of your life.

Inner transformation to improve society

People have now become aware of the effect of the transformation of consciousness on human behaviour. In drug rehabilitation centres they are saying, "Unless you can transform the mind you cannot do anything to prevent addiction." In the jails and corrective institutions they are saying, "What are we going to do with these criminals? You cannot change them. You have to give them something else." Where there is corruption in the police or the military, you cannot stop it. The only way to stop corruption is to do something to change the inner consciousness. Yoga is able to transform the inner personality, whereas other methods simply do not work.

8

Insights on Yoga

1960s

Descent of a new form of consciousness

Ever since 1956, I have been visualizing in my mind that yoga is emerging as a very powerful way of life, which is going to influence and alter the events of the world. My energies had been directed to the path of Vedanta because that was my tradition. I thought I would be teaching people that, not yoga. I learned yoga for a different reason altogether. During my years as a wandering mendicant, I discovered an immutable law of life: that pain is inherent in pleasure. People run after happiness and become full of misery. I knew yoga could improve their lot, and that is why I learned it. It was not Vedanta that I had to teach, it was yoga. I am not talking in the sense of a future political power, but in the sense of the descent of a new form of consciousness.

Path of equipoise

Firstly, no one need leave his home and go into oblivion to practise yoga. Secondly, marital relations do not stand in the way of yoga. Thirdly, it is not necessary to become a vegetarian to practise yoga.

The real aim of yoga is to attain peace and tranquillity within. For this, you need not give up your normal ways. Let me put it more bluntly. Running away from life is not

the way to deliverance. Samsara is not *maya* or illusion. It may be *maya* to the philosopher, because he lives in a world of imagination and his feet are not solidly on the ground. Yoga is different, it is practical. It has nothing to do with philosophical flights of fancy. Never believe for a moment that the life of the householder is low and renunciation is high. Let no woman think that her status in life is inferior to that of a man.

Those who hold orthodox views on yoga are not fit to propagate it. We believe that yoga has a special role to play in the world of today. It can remove our mental and physical afflictions. It can bring joy to our hearts and homes. Our concept of yoga does not lay down extraordinary rules and regulations of self-discipline and behaviour. You can continue to enjoy the good things of life and still be a yogi.

One more idea that will give you a jolt, but I must remove the cobwebs of your mind: do not give up your worldly ambitions, your material aspirations. If you do so, it will do you no good. It will bring harm to society and ruin the country. However, do not become the slave of your desires. Be like the ocean that remains undisturbed as the turbulent, rushing water of rivers pour into it. Enjoy sense gratification, but do not let it overpower you. Do not despise life. There is no virtue in retiring to the forest and sitting enchanted in the solitary grandeur of samadhi. Heroism lies in remaining steadfast in the tumult of life, when the scales are heavily loaded against you, and attaining the samadhi of self-equilibrium.

Creating a new world order of unity

The strong currents of likes and dislikes in individual life have now come to be expressed in national and international life. In this context, it is my firm opinion that yoga has to be practised not only individually but also collectively, not only by the Indians alone, but by the people living in all the different corners of the world. Yama and niyama should become international virtues, acceptable by any government

and by any religion. So far, we have been catering for the individual needs of the people, but now think over a greater plan. Yoga can cater to international needs. Yoga can bring about a new social order, and if at all the psychic race is to be ushered in, it shall only be through yoga.

Everyone should invest in yoga, young and old. The young people of the world need a system such as yoga. Yoga means union and that is just what we could achieve, a union of people throughout the world. Through yoga, everyone would gain insight into their own culture and their own way of life to a level never before believed possible. Such is the power of yoga.

Yoga is going to help man in his course of spiritual evolution and therefore it is one of the world's most sacred cultures. We believe that yoga's contribution will be unique and unparalleled. Yoga will not only help to correct errors in the personality, not only contribute to the physical and mental wellbeing of individuals, but it will bring about a change in the existing social order.

The world today needs change. The old set up of society is unable to meet the spiritual demands of the young, in the West and in the East. The mass anarchical behaviour, the rowdy expression of the psyche, the lunatic asylums that are swelling with people, the crimes that are mounting day by day in all nations, and the dreams of war that are nursed in the bosom of nations, prove that it is high time we retreat from our materialistic attitudes of life, and look within for a more spiritualized and noble life. Scientists, thinkers and men of education are very much concerned about this situation in the world, and they have come to the conclusion that the science of yoga will benefit humanity immensely.

Part of the education system

There is a possibility that yoga will become part of the university curriculum and then it will become an established fact that each one of us can correct the mind, the personality, the thoughts and the schizophrenic or conflicting behaviours through yoga. Imagine what would happen if yoga was

taught in every school in the world, just as we teach mathematics or science. When we consider that about sixty percent of the world's population are children, the implications are staggering. Young people everywhere would be well-adjusted, healthy, happy, perceptive, understanding, physically and mentally fit. They would be aware of their own potential and more capable of its realization. With their spiritual experience, they would be able to operate on a different and higher lever of consciousness, and this could be brought to use in their outer lives, in their work and social pursuits. Yoga encourages service and this could be utilized for the great benefit of mankind.

1970s

Yoga first

To tell you the truth and to be frank, I never thought of a mission, I never had any ambition. Without my wanting, the ashram grew up. Without my wanting, the disciples started coming. Without my wanting it, I went to the West a number of times. Everything happened without my wanting it. Therefore, you can understand that even though humankind is at the same time moving in a different world, in a different and worldly sphere, sooner or later, a great change is going to take place in the whole world. Even if you take a vow here this evening that you are not going to practise yoga, I can assure you that you cannot help it.

You can be sure of one thing. After a few years when you meet your friends, you will say, "Have you got a television?" and he will say yes or no. You will ask, "Have you got a car?" and he will say yes or no. You will ask, "Do you practise yoga?" and if he says no, you will say, "What type of man is he, he does not practise yoga at all!" It has already started happening. When the great violinist Yehudi Menuhin was awarded the Nehru Prize in India, and was asked by the press correspondents what the firm basis of his life was, he said, "First yoga, next music."

Path of synthesis

I can tell you that if you practise yoga asanas, pranayama, meditation, ajapa japa or antar mouna, a change does take place in the body, undoubtedly. However, more than that, a change is taking place in the deeper spheres of your life, only you do not know it. When you practise yoga, you should not accept or you should not take to the path of abstention or rejection, it should be a path of synthesis. Yoga should unite not only two parts but many. All the great thinkers like Annie Besant, Aldous Huxley and Sri Aurobindo have been talking about a superhuman race or a supramental race. You need not be afraid that you are going to develop horns or wings, but you will develop your consciousness to such a degree that you will become aware of the whole cosmos.

Living by the laws of life

Yoga is not a religion, but a science of living according to our means and to the laws of life. If we hold ourselves responsible for the future, our own and that of our children, then we must ensure that the evolution of man is moving along positive lines. Only then will wars cease. Only then will man be able to love his fellow man, and only then will the old understand the young and the young understand the old.

Beyond the intellect

Man is now operating on a different plane. A few centuries ago he was operating on a physical plane or sensual plane. He then began to operate on the intellectual plane. Wherever people are practising yoga, they have begun to think in the way yogis of ancient times use to think. This will bring a civilization where perhaps millions of people will develop psychic faculties. I do not mean clairvoyance and clairaudience. I mean a state of higher consciousness from which we can act in this world. Lord Buddha, Christ, Mohammed and many other saints worked in this world.

The great emperor Marcus Aurelius and King Janaka of India also worked in the world. They did not work from the physical plane or from the intellectual plane. They operated through the psychic or spiritual consciousness. This is how they could understand things much better than we can today.

Scientists, for instance, sometimes have flashes of inspiration or intuition. Where does it come from? It comes from within. At the time of these flashes of inspiration, their personality, their individuality is working on a different plane. This is going to happen to the major part of humanity in the time to come and the period has already started. Therefore, when we are discussing yoga and human potential, I must tell you that it is necessary for all of us to start operating on a different level, higher than the intellect. Let us transcend the intellect. Intellect was a helper, but now it is a barrier. It must be transcended. Intellect has its own glories, but a time comes when the intellect becomes confused. It cannot understand everything because its basis for understanding is logic.

Heralding the psychic race

I feel that the time has come when the world will change. The emphasis on material things will diminish and more emphasis will be put on a higher, spiritual life. This can be realized through yoga. When awareness grows, man's thoughts, concepts and values also change. If humanity as a whole is going to change, whether due to time as it has been destined, or through certain practices, then we are heading into the era of the psychic, the supramental race.

Even if we do not practise yoga, the process of unfolding the awareness is going to take place, and it is taking place. From the beginning of time to this day, awareness has evolved through the laws of nature. Nature's scheme is that all men shall rise above instinct. The consciousness shall rise above instinct, then above the body, senses, mind and intellect. Ultimately, it will operate

on a higher level. This higher level is the spiritual level, the level of yoga.

Before this psychic race is accomplished, man will have to fight a grim battle with himself. The psychic race will not be established so easily. One has to be careful because the first explosion or awakening of the psychic consciousness is complete anarchy, a complete non-acceptance of material values, complete detachment from the established values of life authorities, and so on. This happens in spiritual life, when the development of awareness takes place and we come to a point when we think, 'What is all this nonsense?' Of course, the time also comes when balance returns. This balance must be brought about through evolution or through the practice of yoga.

Discipline for individual and national development

If yoga is neglected or rejected by the West just because it is considered Hindu and not Christian, then the whole structure of those nations will be on the brink of disaster. The West has progressed because it has a well-organized society, but the individual is not organized. In order to discipline the mind at the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual levels, there ought to be a science. No politics, no military, no law can save a country unless the individual is disciplined. Individual discipline is a result of continued practice of yoga.

Yoga in the face of difficulties

A warrior like Arjuna had to carry a bow and arrow in his hand. A man in the battle of life must also carry a bow and arrow in the form of yoga. You are riding in the chariot that is the physical body. It is being driven by five horses, the senses. The chariot is being guided by the spirit or *atman*. Do not put down your bow. Yoga has to be heard and yoga has to be practised, not only in a hermitage, monastery or ashram, but also in the face of difficulties, conflicts and possible defeat.

Mantra for humanity

For many years, I lived with my guru, Swami Sivananda, in the Rishikesh ashram and had the divine opportunity to serve him. During this period, I had time to reflect over the matters of body, mind and spirit. After I left the ashram, I wandered all over India, Nepal, Afghanistan, Burma and Ceylon on foot, by rail or by bullock cart. I realized then that it was necessary for every individual to follow a path. It is not that people do not need faith or belief, they do, but today they need something more than that. Yoga can fulfil this long sought after need. Yoga is one of the holiest mantras of humanity and it is going to be the foundation of the future world communities. It is a culture for humanity, for everyone, regardless of religion, caste or race, for those who believe in God and also for those who do not.

Unless we find the way, the purpose for existence, we will not be able to experience the greater side of our lives, the ultimate dimension of our consciousness. The most practical and the easiest way for each and every individual to contact the substratum of his existence is through yoga. People are searching for the purpose of their life. Yoga will give them a path to discover this.

Light of understanding

Although yoga is going to become a mighty force at the end of this century and during the next, this does not mean that man will not fall ill, that rivalry will not take place, and that everyone will love each other. It does not mean there will be no hatred in the world, and that everybody will become happy and free from problems and disease. However, one great change will be brought about through the power of yoga. Yoga will bring light to man's thinking processes and will improve the quality of his thought and perception. Thereby it will enable him to understand the necessity of his problems. This is what we are expecting. Diversity is the nature of the world. Yoga cannot go against it. There will be diverse religions and sects. There will still be wars and there

will still be love, hatred and massacres. There will also be people like Buddha and Christ coming from time to time. You cannot go beyond all this because the world is the play of the three gunas.

I think the world will continue towards a spiritual goal, with a greater emphasis on simplicity, discipline and inner understanding. There will be wars, fights, conflicts and change of governments. All that will happen. Problems are eternal and conflicts are eternal, but what is important is the goal of man. Yoga offers humanity a positive direction, a positive future.

Complete, profound and honest

My one sincere request to all of you is to arm yourselves with the knowledge of yoga. It is not a limited science. It is a vast science with scope to influence education, mental and physical disorders, family life and personal life. It can control the unruly behaviour of your mind. After all the research carried out on the effects of yoga, I have come to one conclusion. If there is any science that is complete and profound, as well as being absolutely honest, it is yoga.

1980s

Ultimate solution

Decades ago, Carl Jung, one of the leading thinkers in modern psychology, wrote in his famous classics that the ultimate solution for man lies in the discipline provided by yoga. He stated clearly that yoga is a science that does not ignore any dimension of man's existence, nor does it erect any artificial barriers between these dimensions. The body is not divorced from the mind and the mind is not separated from the spirit. Body, mind and spirit, each of the three faces of human personality are provided with a very systematic and scientific discipline. Jung has written a lot about yoga. He indicated that he felt the time had come when man should not only look to the disease from which he is suffering, but

that he should also look to the cause of that disease. He felt that it was time to discover not only the cause, but a solution to the cause as well. In my view, man's problems lie in his own concept of life. That is the cause of his disease and that has to be solved. Yoga will help man in this discovery.

Recognition by science

Yoga does not go by beliefs; it goes by investigations and discoveries. That is the reason I am more attracted to the scientific investigations, examinations and interpretations. I want to develop the scientific side of yoga with the help of open-minded examiners and investigators because yoga science has much to contribute to the good of humanity. I think that the age of religious supremacy has gone. This is the age of science. Throughout the world, millions and millions of people are under the grip of a scientific process of thinking and it will grow more and more. So it is better that we go hand in hand with the people who are going to preside over the destinies of mankind tomorrow. Religion is not going to preside over the destiny of humankind, I am absolutely sure about it. It is science, scientists, and scientific thinking which will preside, and this science will recognize the potential of yoga for humanity.

Discovering the inner reality

In the last fifty years that I can remember, in India as well as abroad, the spiritual awareness has grown tremendously. There is a fantastic discovery by man of the spiritual nature, not only in India, America and Europe, but everywhere. People are becoming yoga-orientated, meditation-orientated. They are trying to discover the reality behind experiences. They are going to ashrams and yoga classes, and the teachers are having a very good opportunity to serve them.

These are the indications that man is now becoming a seeker. It may even be partly due to the modern technological stress and strain, but if such stresses can help to bring you and me closer to that discovery of the Self,

let it be, let it happen! After all, it is important to discover something real behind the so-called appearances. I am optimistic and I think that through yoga, humanity as a whole is going to discover the reality within.

Need of the times

Yoga has not emerged because of our efforts, but because of the needs of the times and the requirements of humanity. Even if we were not allowed to teach people about yoga, man would discover it for himself. Yoga is going to become the culture of humanity. It is a very powerful way of life and it is through yoga that man will find a solution to his spiritual crisis and gain a true understanding of himself.

Yoga for future generations

According to all the revelations, the best yoga for the future generations and the coming age is repetition of God's name. That is the yoga sadhana the coming generation will use. It has been said that the people in the coming age will become restless, greedy and passionate, and they will not find peace in anything. However, if they practise repetition of the Lord's name, they will find peace. As it is said in the Bible, Koran and other scriptures, people must remember and sing God's name while observing devotion. This practice will bring good results to the practitioner and to others as well. This is going to be the greatest yoga, the common yoga.

9

The Classical Yogas

In India, for thousands of years, yogis have experimented, practised and perfected the science of yoga in order to initiate a process of evolution in the total nature of man: the physical, mental, emotional, intellectual and spiritual levels. There are various practices of yoga related to the different dimensions of man's personality. Yoga practices have been defined and classified according to their specific purpose. Such classifications include *karma yoga*, the yoga of action; *bhakti yoga*, the yoga of emotion; *raja yoga*, the yoga of psychic balance; and *jnana yoga*, the yoga of rational analysis and understanding.

Man is not merely intellect, a body or emotions; he is a composition of many factors. Various yoga practices develop different areas of man's personality, the emotions, mind, psyche, body, and so on. Therefore, yoga should be understood as a science that trains the various aspects of one's thinking, feeling, emotion and expression. For example, in hatha yoga, the yoga practices aim to balance the solar and lunar energies in the body. In bhakti yoga, the emotions are harmonized. In jnana yoga, the practices facilitate an investigation into the real nature of the Self. In raja yoga, to develop understanding, the mind itself is analyzed in detail. In kundalini yoga, the sleeping centres in the brain are awakened.

Yoga is a practical science for the transformation of the mind and personality as a whole. At the same time,

it has positive bearings on the physical health of man. In the science of yoga, it is believed that when the mind is sick and the spirit is under the veil of ignorance, then diseases develop in the physical body. The science of yoga tries to deliver mankind from physical diseases and mental unhappiness by helping him to discover the innermost area of his own self or personality. Yoga involves the training, reorientation and education of the whole mind, and thus the various forms of yoga should be properly understood and practised.

HATHA YOGA

Process of purification

In order to purify the mind, it is necessary for the body as a whole to undergo a process of absolute purification. Hatha yoga is also known as the science of purification, not just one type of purification but six types for six different impurities. When you clear the body of these impurities, the nadis function and the energy blocks are released. Then the energies move like wave frequencies throughout the channels within the physical structure, moving right up to the brain. Therefore, we consider hatha yoga as the preliminary practice of tantra, raja yoga, kundalini yoga and kriya yoga. However, shatkarma alone does not constitute the whole of hatha yoga. After shatkarma you should practise asana and pranayama.

Balancing ida and pingala

The word 'hatha' means *ida* and *pingala*, the lunar and solar channels, the mental and vital energies or the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous channels. Balance, harmony and equilibrium in these two great nervous systems can be brought about by nothing else except the practice of hatha yoga.

The main objective of hatha yoga is to create an absolute balance of the interacting activities and processes of the

physical body, mind and energy. When this balance is created, the impulses generated give a call of awakening to the central force, sushumna nadi, which is responsible for the evolution of human consciousness. If hatha yoga is not used for this purpose, its true objective is lost.

Physical and mental therapy

Hatha yoga is a method of preparing the system for spiritual awakening, but physical and mental therapy is also one of the most important achievements of hatha yoga. Since ancient times it has also been used by yogis and rishis for the relief and elimination of all kinds of diseases and defects. So far, hatha yoga has succeeded in managing diseases like asthma, diabetes and high blood pressure where modern science has not. Besides this, hatha yoga has proved very effective in cases of epilepsy, hysteria, rheumatism and many other ailments of a chronic and constitutional nature. In fact, we have found that most diseases of a chronic and constitutional nature can definitely be reversed through hatha yoga.

The practice of hatha yoga lessens and prevents the decay of tissues by increasing the life force and filling the system with abundant energy. By practising hatha yoga, the blood is charged with abundant oxygen, the accumulation of venous blood is stopped and the brain and spinal centres are rejuvenated. By practising hatha yoga the mind is strengthened, the memory is improved, the intellect is sharpened and intuition is developed. Through the practice of hatha yoga, a practitioner first attains a strong, firm and healthy body and then takes to raja yoga.

RAJA YOGA

The supreme yoga

Raja yoga, the supreme yoga, the presiding yoga, is the yoga related to the secrets within yourself. Everyone knows that most of the difficulties in human life are created by one's

own mind. The mind must be cured; it must be made free from all its bad habits and conditionings. Hence, the practice of raja yoga is a very important item in our life because raja yoga is the yoga of the mind, the yoga of total mind: the yoga of the external mind, the yoga of the middle mind, and the yoga of the deeper mind.

Raja yoga is concerned with the subconscious mind, the psychic body, the unseen mind, the subliminal personality, the 'id' of Freud. It is a yoga that concerns your thoughts, your feelings and your deeper nature, and it is the most systematic yoga. Raja yoga is the science of mental discipline, concentration, meditation and the experience of unity. Raja yoga includes the systems of kundalini yoga, laya yoga, kriya yoga, mantra yoga and dhyana yoga.

Twofold process

An aspirant who wants to experience the higher realm of consciousness in all its pristine glory, should follow the whole course of raja yoga. Raja yoga recommends a twofold process for this purpose, the esoteric and the exoteric. Yama and niyama, asana and pranayama make up the exoteric process, and pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi form the esoteric process. After one has purified one's life through karma yoga, and accomplished one-pointedness of mind through bhakti yoga, one should approach a qualified guru for instructions on the discipline of raja yoga.

Balancing the fluctuations of mind

Raja yoga is a combination of the practices in which the relationship between the brain, the senses and the external objects is decided. This is important because most of the problems in our day-to-day lives are on account of our distorted mental behaviour. We may think that we have a normal mind, but we do not. We do not know anything about the mind and this is the tragedy.

There are people who have very restless minds. Their mind does not rest all twenty-four hours. It works even

during dream and sleep. Even when the brainwaves are changing from beta to theta, theta to alpha and alpha to delta, the mind is moving in some way or another. Those who want to manage the mental influxes, the mental functions and channelize the energies of the mind for a better purpose, should practise raja yoga.

KARMA YOGA

I am thankful that I got the opportunity to live with my guru in Rishikesh and give every bit of my sweat, every bit of my energy, every part of my mind, all of my emotions, passions and ambitions, that I could work for him day and night like a donkey, like a madman.

Working for self-purification

According to the *Bhagavad Gita*, karma yoga is hard work, ceaseless work, work with efficiency, work with equilibrium, without getting affected by the karmas that the work brings to you. Maybe it is a success, maybe it is a failure, or maybe it is a mixture of both success and failure. Whatever the outcome is, you should not worry about it. Work for the sake of self-purification, work efficiently in order to yoke all the tendencies of your mind. Work with equilibrium in order to succeed in the work, but if you do not get the desired results, you should not worry. That is called *karma yoga*, and that is what has to be practised in every sphere of life.

When you practise karma yoga, when you are expressing your body and mind, where you are not creating tension and fighting with your conflicts, you grow side by side with passions, with desire, with instincts, but at the same time, internal purification is taking place. The result of internal purification is mental balance. When the purification of mind takes place by a constant, relentless and prolonged process of elimination of karma, that purification results in real mental balance.

Cleansing the mind

When you have a bad stomach, it is very uncomfortable. You pass very bad wind and have very bad dreams. Then it affects your liver and other parts of your body. Somebody tells you to practise shankhaprakshalana and it cleans your stomach completely. In the same way, you have to clean your mind.

The mind cannot be cleaned without undergoing a process of purging. What is this purging? You have a lot of pain in your mind, that is purging. You have bad dreams in the night, that is purging. You get angry many times, that is purging. Like this, nature has created many ways of purging. We do not like them all because we think they are unethical and immoral. We think that it is barbaric to get angry, that it is savage. Passions, desires, anger, frustration, disappointment, greed, jealousy, fears, all these are outlets created by nature for all human beings to practise shankhaprakshalana. They are nature's way of cleansing.

Facing life

How can you clean the mind? In bhakti yoga, there is no such provision. Here God is fine, his glory is fine, his creation is fine, his devotees are fine, the sanctum sanctorum is fine, the flowers and the priest are fine. Everything is so nice there. In raja yoga, everything is wonderful and clean: truth, non-violence, celibacy, contentment, non-greed, non-aggrandizement, physical and mental purity. You understand how nice these systems are, but you are not facing life there. You are not facing yourself, because everything is so nice.

However, in karma yoga, you face everything. 'This swami talks like a big boss. Oh, what is he talking about? He eats so much, like a glutton, and when I go for food, he says the vegetable is finished. I am working just as hard as he is and when I eat twenty chappatis, he looks at me. I am working on the building and he is talking to that girl. He doesn't work. I'm working so much while he is having a nice time with her.' This you can only face in karma yoga, when you are concerned with the affairs of life, when your body is in

demand, when your emotions are in demand, and when you are relating yourself to every Tom, Dick and Harry.

At that time, you can make a clear classification of the sattwic, rajasic and tamasic nature of individuals. Go closely with yourself. Observe everybody's behaviour impartially without judging anyone, and just see on which level your mind is floating. Sometimes you are full of remorse and guilt. Sometimes you are arrogant and sometimes you are as idiotic as a pig. Sometimes you are as angry as a demon and sometimes you are a gentleman. Sometimes you are a saint. The process of the threefold universal nature of man can be realized by you only in karma yoga. If you do not know yourself in the external life, how can you purify?

Absence of doership

You should not feel that you have enough knowledge or that you are doing a lot of karma yoga. That feeling of doership should be absolutely absent, otherwise, again *ashanti* will come, restlessness will be revived.

Peace of mind

Gradually, through the practice of karma yoga, the mind obtains absolute tranquillity within and without. You are at peace with yourself and with everybody else. At this time, when you sit for meditation with your eyes closed or open, after practising kriya yoga or without practising kriya yoga, the mind begins to drop away without any effort and you do not know what is happening to yourself.

Even as sleep comes to a man who is tired after his day's labour, in the same way, to a man who has practised karma yoga in right earnest, without the sense of ego, with total detachment and dedication, who has yoked his body, mind, emotions, passions, violence, his demonical and animal nature completely to work, spontaneous samadhi comes. This spontaneous samadhi is called *sahaja samadhi* and it can be had by you in this very life if you understand the role of karma yoga.

JNANA YOGA

Absolute truth

‘I am a part of the cosmic nature’, that is jnana yoga. That is the first truth that we have to know and believe, and keep in our minds. This body is not the ultimate substance. It is a reflection of some other truth, and the knowledge of time in relation to this mind is a finite concept. The awareness of time and space through this mind is a finite concept, not an infinite concept. Therefore, it is not absolute, and when it is not absolute, it cannot be truth. That which is truth must be absolute. This realization is jnana yoga.

Facing destiny with cheer

If you are an ignorant or worldly person, you will undergo your destiny with pain. You will cry and weep and break your heart; but if you are a jnani or a man of knowledge, you can face your destiny with cheerfulness. You don’t grieve and you don’t ruin your health, you just face it.

Separating illusion from truth

For a jnani, there is only one reality: the absolute, and nothing else exists. You see, it is true that everything is fleeting; everything is based on our emotions and on the error of our perception, and everything is essentially not true. But then, when you are affected by the fantasy of the subconscious mind, how can you say that you are beyond maya? You are in maya. You will be in maya. You are in illusion. You are a part of illusion. How to get out of it?

In order to get out of one illusion, you have to take the help of another illusion. It is through the practices of yoga that a proper vision will be restored and a proper quality of mind will emerge. When you develop that quality of mind, then you can say, “This is maya and this is truth, this is reality and this is fiction,” but now if you say the whole world is maya, everything in existence is illusion, it’s not true.

State of a jnani

If the whole existence is maya, it is okay, I agree. Then your agonies are maya, your happiness is maya, and your cancer is also maya, blood pressure is also maya, diabetes is also maya. Your wife or husband has divorced you. It is all maya! It is all happening in a dream. If you can come to this point of realization, if you can arrive at this experience, where every happening in your life does not affect you, as in a dream, then of course, you don't have to practise yoga at all. You should not practise mantra. You should not go after gurus. You should not take sannyasa. You should not come to ashrams. You can just remain wherever you are because you are a jnani.

The man of supreme wisdom is called a jnani. For him, disease and death are both dreams. Prosperity and poverty are both dreams. Such jnanis are not born every day. They come only once in many thousands of years. To consider the whole of existence as nothing is so difficult, so impossible. A little dream in the night terrifies you so much. Even if you know it is a dream, a fantasy created by your subconscious mind, it still it has an effect.

BHAKTI YOGA

Practice for Kali Yuga

We are currently in the Kali Yuga and we are not as innocent as our ancestors were 20,000 years ago, but definitely, we will have spiritual experiences. This Kali Yuga does have an advantage. In this age, if you devote yourself to God by the practice of bhakti yoga, and sing his name, you can achieve the same result in a few days as those people in Satya Yuga who practised austerities, penance and spiritual life for thousands and thousands of years. This is the greatness of Kali Yuga, that even a little spiritual practice can elevate you to superb heights.

Kinship with the divine

The strong feeling, the strong impulse or attraction towards the Supreme Being is known as *bhakti*. It is a sort of kinship

with the divine, an elective affinity with God. Yet, our gurus, in Hinduism as well as in Christianity, have failed to explain how bhakti is intimately connected with the emotions and passions of our lives. Just as a passionate man loves a woman, so we must approach our deity with the same force, the same urge, the same attitude and the same spontaneity. Do you have to make effort when you love somebody? No! It is not difficult. Love, reverence, surrender and faith form the core of bhakti; it cannot be taught.

Directing emotional energy

My concept of bhakti yoga is that it is a method, a process of adjustment, of selfless emotion in man. We have so much emotional energy in us that we are unable to exhaust that energy. We give that energy to our children, to our family members, to various works in the world, but it remains unexhausted. Now this energy must be properly directed. How do we do this? If we give the whole of this emotional energy to our family members, the outlet is still not sufficient.

We can love the whole world actually, we have so much energy, but we do not know how to do this. When it overflows, it manifests in the form of erratic behaviour, in the form of so many things that we see in the world, murder, crime, this and that. This is nothing but misguided emotion. Now, this energy of which we have so much and which we cannot control, must be properly directed. How do we do this?

Ultimately, it was decided by the ancient seers that whatever love you have within, give it to Him. In this way, the unused treasure of love that you have been misusing in so many ways can be properly channelled. Since He is infinite, He can consume all love you give Him. You give love to Him in the form of play, in the form of praying, in the form of service to humanity, in the form of calm and quiet meditation, in the form of self-purification, or by chanting His name day in and day out. You give Him your love in any manner you can and He is able to consume it, because He is eternal and infinite.

Surrendering to the tide of devotion

The conversation between the devotee and his God takes place in the stage of oneness. Therefore, when the devotional impulses overflow beyond limits, seize this golden opportunity and allow yourself to be swept away by the tide of devotion without any resistance. At that time prayer becomes immensely powerful. When the heart is full of strong devotion, shut your room and sit down for meditation. When such an auspicious moment of divine grace and love comes, then you should proceed to efface yourself and meet the divine. Then whatever you love is love for God. For every pleasure is His, every breath is His miracle, every day is His glory, you are His manifestation, everything in the world is a manifestation of the divine. There comes a moment when the soul awakens and the essential unity between the sentient and the insentient is realized. It is a very high thing. A great bhakta is one who sees God in all, and when he sees this, he is beyond all kinds of experiences.

Keep your emotions for the divine

Emotions are only meant for bhakti yoga, and not for every little thing of this world. Nature has provided you with an intellect to deal with all the worldly matters. You can love and hate everybody intellectually, but the heart must be reserved for one thing only. When you hear the glory of God, when you sing His name, when you sit before a man of God, or when you are narrating or listening to His stories, at these times you should lock your intellect away and bring your emotions out.

You will find that every situation can be managed through an intellectual process. Running an ashram, living with disciples, receiving money and parting with it, giving advice to people, having interpersonal relationships, even the most intimate relationships, these are all intellectual affairs. The emotions should not be wasted on such matters. Relationships with the whole world are cursory and they cannot or should not be so deep that they are rooted in the

emotions. If the emotions are conserved and reserved for one purpose of God-realization, they will serve as a swift vehicle leading you straight into a higher experience.

The reason why people do not have higher experiences is that they give their emotions to the worldly things and their intellect to God, and so they fail in both areas. If you give your emotions and personality to the world, it will not pay you any dividend, you will only meet with disappointments, frustration, depression, disillusionment and disease. If you give your intellect to God, you will not get anywhere. You will have some funny ideas about God, you might pray and pray and pray, but to what avail? Therefore, you are failing spiritually and you are failing in your empirical affairs. Now, reverse the situation: intellect for the world and emotions for God.

Necessary part of spiritual evolution

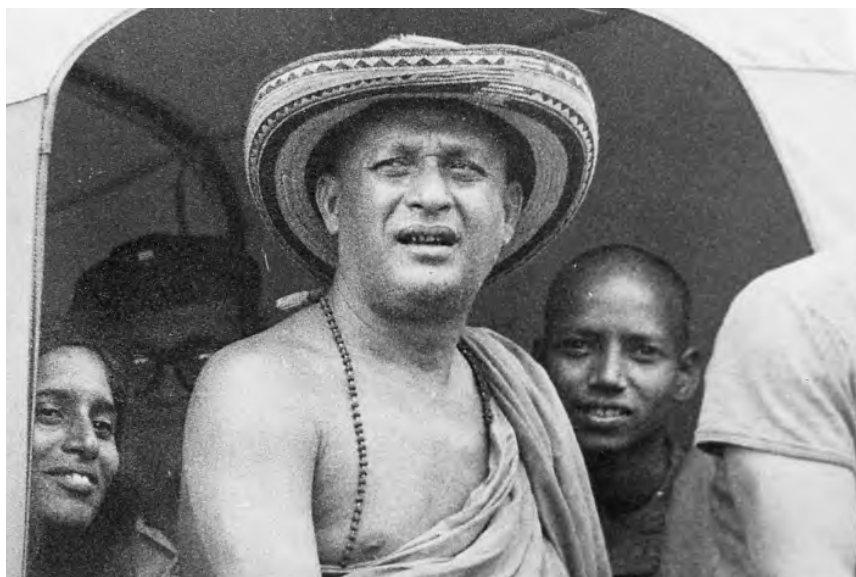
When one wants to evolve in spiritual life, dry raja yoga will not do; full, exciting kundalini yoga will not do. I have absolute respect for all these, because I teach them. I am not criticizing them. I am only pointing out their limitations. You have to awaken the devotional aspect in yourself, and do not say that you do not have it. If you did not have this stuff in you, how could you love, how could you hate, how could you be sad, how could you be happy?

We have been practising dhyana yoga without developing our love to the full extent. We have been practising transcendental meditation, we have been practising Rajneesh meditation, we have been practising ajapa japa meditation, without fully developing, without fully manifesting, without fully exposing the bhakti aspect of our lives.

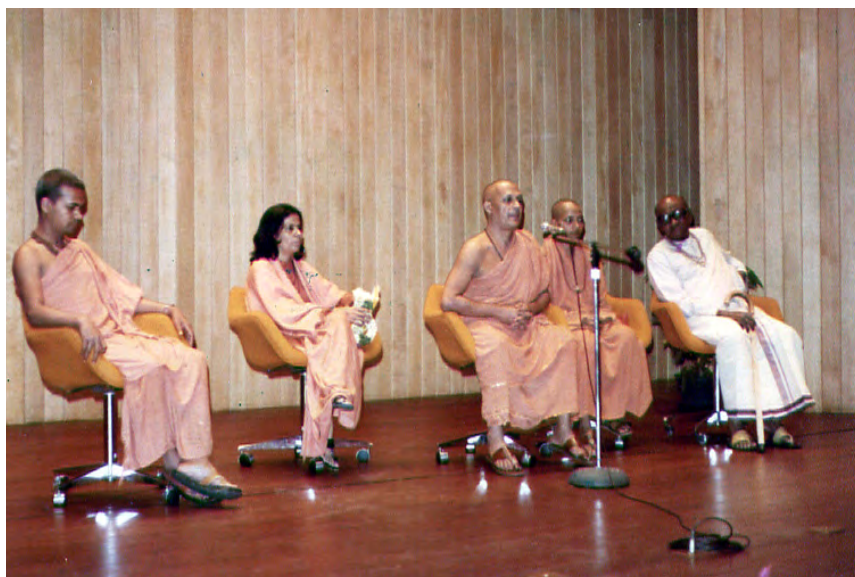
This bhakti aspect of our life has been misled. We have been squandering the bhakti. Where has our bhakti gone? To the pictures, to the television, from one man to another man, from one girl to another girl, from one type of dress to another type of dress. We have been squandering this great, priceless gem, this gift of eternal reality which every



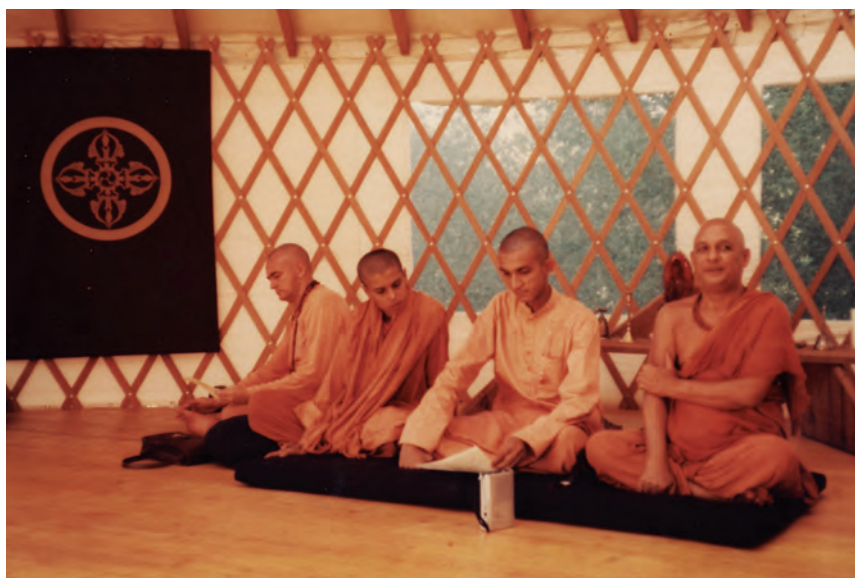
London, 1968



Colombia, 1977



Singapore, 1979



USA, 1982



Australia, 1982



Ganga Darshan, 1987



The road to Ganga Darshan, 1981



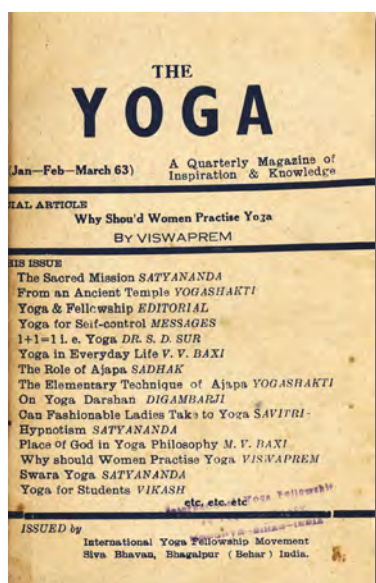
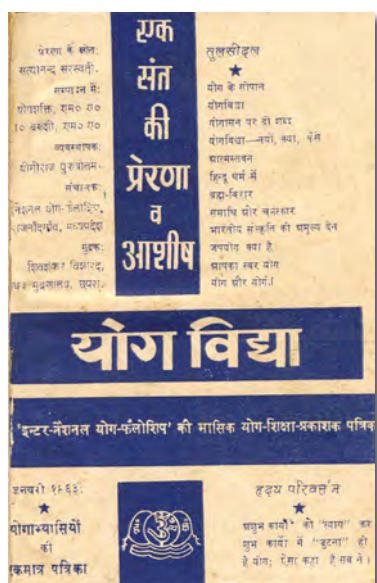
Shakti Vihar, Ganga Darshan, 1981



Guest House, Ganga Darshan, 1983



Main Building, Ganga Darshan, 1983



Yogavidya and Yoga magazines, 1963



Early BSY publications, 1966



Ashram Graphics, Munger, 1986



Ashram Graphics, Munger, 1986



The ultimate yoga, 1997



Rikhia, 2009

animal, every vegetable, every human being possesses, which everything has. This bhakti has to be developed.

Therefore, the one who ignites the dormant bhakti in your personality, the guru, comes first in spiritual life. Once the bhakti is accomplished, dhyana yoga becomes spontaneous. You close your eyes and things start happening. For the awakening of this bhakti, guru is the first, the second is kirtan, and the third is satsang.

Power of bhakti

The practice of bhakti is mind-consuming. It is such a powerful path! Once you can handle it, awakening is just a joke, but if you understand bhakti as prayer, rituals, reading of scriptures or just talking about God, then you have missed the point. Those people who have practised bhakti yoga in utmost sincerity have lived a life of total madness. They have not cared for anything substantial, significant or important in this life. For them, love, devotion, bhakti to that ultimate substance, has been the sole purpose. They did not care if they were executed or killed, criticized or kicked, or even annihilated completely.

Bhakti completely releases the mind from material attachments, from material association. You can only imagine it. When you love someone in this world intensely, maybe your child, maybe your boyfriend or girlfriend, what happens to you? You overcome many things and many ideas. Even by loving these mortal things, the child or friend, you are able to overcome, to transcend. If you have any idea about how to love the eternal Self, transcendence will be a spontaneous experience.

Ultimate destination

The culmination of all paths, tantra, raja yoga, karma yoga, and even jnana yoga, is bhakti. It is the atom bomb of spiritual life, it is the greatest force, but it is very difficult. Bhakti yoga is the most powerful method to come face to face with and realize that formless, nameless, transcendental Paramatma in any

form. It is definitely not a myth; *bhakti yoga* is the transmutation of love from matter to spirit. You can ring the temple bell, read the prayers in church or do anything externally, but streamlining your emotions is almost impossible. However, in *bhakti yoga* you must be able to do this. Just as all the rivers flowing from every part of the Himalayas ultimately reach Indranagar, the totality of man's consciousness – his mystic, occult consciousness, his psyche, subconscious and conscious mind, all meet at one point, the Supreme Being. Once *bhakti* is realized, there is nothing beyond that.

The intensity of love for God has to be such that the total energy, the total awareness and the total mind are consumed. You sing His name. You repeat His name. You think of His glories and greatness with your mind and you try to keep Him in your heart and mind all the time, as you do with ordinary things in life.

When your mind is given to the attachments of the world, then you feel pain, agony and disappointment. There is always separation, but the moment you become aware of your Beloved, all your energies are consumed, and you forget your surroundings. This leads to deep experiences and brings about a sense of identification. That is *bhakti yoga*. You dedicate your mind to God, the divine being, then you find total satisfaction, and at the same time, an experience of fulfilment.

JAPA YOGA

Easiest path

The word *japa* means 'to rotate'. According to realized saints, *japa yoga* means union of the self with the highest existence through the rotation of consciousness. Of all the systems of yoga used to induce *pratyahara* and intended to lead eventually to *samadhi*, *japa yoga* can be practised by anyone at any time and under any conditions. *Japa* is the easiest and safest way by which a person can elevate the state of consciousness through the repetition of the mantra, either

alone or in a group. The practice of mantra japa purifies the physical body and a host of mental vagaries. It fills the mind with spiritual vitality.

Awakening psychic awareness

According to yoga, the purpose of practising japa with the mala is for awakening the psychic awareness in an average individual. If you are practising japa for the awakening of awareness, then you have to observe certain restrictions and follow certain methods in order to impress or influence the psychic structure. The human psyche doesn't remain steady for very long, therefore it is necessary to choose some medium or a basis through which you can know those moments when the mind becomes absent. The method is to practise japa with a mala.

At a certain stage of japa, when your mind becomes calm and serene, there dawns a state in which the fingers can remain inert, as if momentarily paralyzed. You are quiet and you forget about yourself, yet the inner awareness is in tune with the movement of the beads in japa. If the mala falls, there is a break in the ceaseless flow of your awareness. You will be under the impression that you have experienced a high spiritual state when actually you have entered *laya*, suspension of the mind. Either the awareness has gone on a different route altogether or it has lost its track; the mind is suspended.

Practise in seclusion

The practice of japa should not be done in front of anybody, especially a non-practitioner. It is a different matter if five or ten people are sitting together in a room and all of them are practitioners. Japa should be practised in absolute seclusion. It is a natural law that when psychic acts are performed before others, they lose their power. Therefore, the rule has always been that your spiritual practices, including japa, should not be made known to other people. If they are, they will lose their value.

Approaches to japa

When you practise japa, there are two approaches. One is that of a bhakta or devotee, who just does the practice, thinking that he is remembering God's name and that God will fulfil his wishes. The second is the psychic approach, that of the yogi, who may or may not have much faith in God, but knows that by doing japa the consciousness becomes more and more subtle, and ultimately it loses touch with his normal consciousness and moves to a higher dimension.

Repetition of God's name

The word 'japa' means repetition of the name of God. In all the religions of the world, the practice of the repetition of the name of the divine has been prescribed as a daily ritual. Japa has been recognized to be the most powerful expedient enabling an aspirant to reach those regions of final beatitude and bliss for which all human beings aspire at one stage or the other. Therefore, in this modern age where human beings have lost all their sense of values and are going the wrong way, one of the most potent and affecting redeemers from the sorrows of this world is japa, the repetition of God's name. Japa is thus regarded and recognized as one of the easiest methods for liberation from bondage.

Patanjali, the great exponent of yoga, in explaining the last element of devotion to God, declares that the sacred syllable *Om* is the symbol of the Almighty Being, and an aspirant seeking illumination should not only repeat this mantra, but also contemplate its meaning.

Beyond mechanical repetition

Since japa implies repeating some sacred formula there must be such a definite formula, and that formula is called a mantra. Etymologically, mantra is something which, when repeated and contemplated upon, enables the practitioner to reach his goal. So, mere mechanical repetition of the mantra is ruled out. The practitioner has not only to

comprehend its inner meaning fully but also to meditate upon it.

In yoga, therefore, great importance is assigned to the practice of japa. It is a method of spiritual communion through the repetition of the mantra. By continued repetition, you create a certain vibration in your system. The recitation of the mantra purifies the physical organism and fills the mind with spiritual vitality. Japa frees one from a host of mental vagaries and problems. According to realized saints, the mantra gives perfect knowledge of God and is the best medium for communion with God.

MANTRA YOGA

Freedom from obsessions

Mantra is not a holy name or a divine sound. Literally, the word *mantra* means 'by contemplating upon which, the mind is freed from obsessions'.

Guru mantra

Up to the point of initiation, you can practise any general mantra, but once you have been initiated into a mantra, that becomes your personal mantra and it should not be changed. Your guru mantra must be repeated according to the instructions given at initiation. The mantra which is given by your guru for the accomplishment of a particular act must be kept secret. You should not divulge it to anyone, not even to your family members.

Everyone should have his own mantra and practise japa with complete regularity for fifteen minutes or half-an-hour daily. At the time of mantra japa, faith and conviction are most important. If your faith and devotion are unshakeable, the mantra will awaken soon within you.

To all of you who have a mantra and to those of you who wish to receive one, I will remind you once again that everything in life can fail, but the mantra never will.

Expelling the impressions

Every morning and every night, you must practise your mantra; let the experiences come out. It is like cleaning your apartment every morning and every night. Just as you clean your kitchen, your house, do you clean your mind? How do you clean the mind? It is very difficult. Ethics or morals cannot clean the mind. In yoga, mantra is a most powerful method of purifying the dross of the mind. That is the purpose of mantra, for when it is repeated again and again, it allows your mind to expel its impressions.

When you take a mantra from your guru, you should not expect concentration. If you are practising concentration with your mantra you are suppressing constipation, mental constipation. When you practise mantra, more and more depressions come out. Worries must come out, anxiety must come out, passions, fears and suicidal tendencies must come out; all that is foul must come out.

Basis of spiritual life

Mantra is the very basis of yoga, tantra and spiritual life. Mantra japa can give contentment and can influence your character and personality. Mantra can influence the brain, body, subconscious and unconscious realms. Mantra is so powerful that it can change your destiny, economic situation, physical structure, and so forth. Therefore, when you are practising mantra japa, be an impartial witness of all your experiences. Face all the distractions and oscillations that arise in your mind, with the understanding that mantra is a means to purify your consciousness.

Two forces in mantra

There are two forces, two powers in the mantra. One is the power of consciousness, Shiva or what is called Purusha. The other is the force of nature, matter or Prakriti. Through mantra sadhana, these two forces are awakened and continue to help you for the whole of your life.

Morning sadhana

Every morning, when you have finished your asana and pranayama, take your mala and sit down for mantra japa. Close your eyes, relax your body and mind. Forget your name, forget your home and forget your environment. Just repeat your mantra, immerse yourself in it and become the mantra itself.

Most important link

In 1943, my guru Swami Sivananda gave me a mantra and told me to practise five malas every day. The practice took me no longer than three minutes in all. I practise five malas regularly every day and during this period the most important link in my life is formed in those three minutes. Had I renounced my link with the mantra, I would never have achieved the position that I have today. These five malas saved me so that today I stand firmly as a swami, holding the torch of a spiritual culture.

DHARANA YOGA

Concentration of mind

Dharana means internal concentration of mind. It is the step before meditation and is concerned with fixing awareness on one object, one symbol to the exclusion of all others. At present this is not possible, as you know by experience how difficult it is to maintain awareness of one object for a long time without any thought intervention. Sometimes the breaks become so powerful that it is difficult to concentrate again. This is called *vikshepa*; it is a disturbance, a distraction. A beginner always experiences this difficulty. Sometimes he is able to bring his mind back to the spot and sometimes he is not. The mind is still full of inner chatter in the form of memories of the past and projections of the future. The mind thinks of and tries to relive past pleasant experiences, is obsessed by unpleasant experiences, or is planning or fearing the future.

Various methods can be used to induce mental one-pointedness. Religions in general try to induce it through ritual, church service, *pooja* or worship, chanting, kirtan, prayer, and so forth. Yoga utilizes a psychic symbol as a focal point for dharana. It can be one's guru, a deity, a mantra, an enquiry. It can be almost anything. It must be something that spontaneously attracts the attention and must be chosen to suit the inherent nature of one's mind and personality. The psychic symbol, projected in front of the closed eyes, must be so overwhelming that one's whole being is consumed and absorbed by it; otherwise, one's psyche will remain scattered. An object that one likes, such as the object of devotion, is the surest way of making the mind steady, controlled and peaceful.

Perception of consciousness

You are your consciousness; you see your awareness, but it is an internal perception. It may be a round stone, a triangle, a flower or anything, but you should be able to see it. That object which you see inside is not imagination; it is a form of your consciousness. If you see a flower inside, you see your own consciousness in the pattern of a flower. If you see a triangle, you do not see a triangle as in the imagination; it is your consciousness which you perceive in the form of a triangle. The triangle which you see inside is made up of your consciousness through which you understand me. It is the same consciousness through which I am able to speak to you on yoga. It is the same consciousness through which you know what is right, through which your intelligence or intellect functions. It is the same consciousness which manifests in day-to-day life in the form of memory, and through which you understand hatred and love. It is the same consciousness that functions in the world, and it is not imagination or hypothesis but a force, an awareness, an instrument of knowledge, or medium of understanding, the substance of perception.

It is this consciousness that is withdrawn from objects, from intellectual knowledge, from experience and memory

of the past, from the knowledge of right and wrong. When it has been disassociated from the different bases of perception, but at the same time it becomes clear to you in the form of a triangle, flower, stone, light or an animal, then it means that you are seeing your own consciousness. This is the fundamental secret of yoga and meditation. In dharana, concentration of mind, you retain a form of consciousness within you as a symbol and do not allow that form of consciousness to disappear from your mind. Eventually, by this act of holding the consciousness, all other dissimilar forms fall away, while the original form always remains. It is an act of unveiling avidya which was covering the consciousness.

Process of involution

To consolidate the multiphase tendencies of the mind, there is a beautiful method known as 'dharana'. *Dharana* means fixing the mind on an object after the senses have been withdrawn. The object could be gross, semi-gross or abstract, but the mind must have an object or a centre on which to fix itself and gradually consolidate all of its faculties. Thus, in this way, the field of the mind is made very narrow. This particular art of yoga is known as the process of negation. This is the process of involution. The personality is withdrawn, until it becomes a point. When you have completely withdrawn the associations, the consciousness and the awareness to a point, it functions as the chosen object, a triangle, a cross, a flower, a circle or a sound.

Eliminating samskaras

Everything which is lying within you, which is embedded within the mind, should be brought out and should be seen by you in the form of images and then in the form of feelings. Thereby you will be exhausting and eliminating your samskaras, your karmas, the disturbing part of your personality, and side by side, you will begin to experience inner happiness. Then your sadness or loneliness, or

whatever you might call it, will go away. To do this you have to practise concentration, any kind of concentration. You can concentrate on a candle flame, a black dot, your own symbol, your mantra, breath, chakras, on your forehead or nose tip. There are many methods. When you begin to concentrate, after some time, the images start coming to you. You can call them psychic images. They are transformations of the awareness of many things that are accumulated in you.

Experience of dharana

How long can the mind function? How long will the distractions remain? When you sit and concentrate on a particular object, after some time, suddenly everything is withdrawn and only the object remains there. When concentration, dharana, becomes deep, then what happens, you lose touch with the ego. The ego is withdrawn, the duality is withdrawn. Finally, the mind is transcended. For the time being, your mind loses the absolute duality. It becomes just a one-pointed force, which can be channelled in one direction. This is a very important accomplishment in yoga.

Dharana yoga needs regular and persistent practice. It takes many years to develop internal concentration and a state of thoughtlessness; it is not just a one-year job. It could even take twenty-five to thirty years to develop, because dharana is a very high stage that requires a lot of preparation. Gradually one will perceive deeper aspects of the symbol; its archetypal nature will start to reveal itself. If you are able to continue unbroken awareness of one object for a certain period, one will spontaneously flow into dhyana and the true state of meditation will itself naturally culminate in samadhi, self-realization, the goal of yoga and the zenith of man's spiritual evolution. Meditation is not different from concentration; it is a higher quality of it.

SWARA YOGA

Language of the breath

Swara yoga is a science that is related to tantra. It is a yoga in which you study your own breath in relation to the tattwas, in relation to the nadis, in relation to the events around you, and you more or less come to a conclusion on all events of life, both internally and externally. So, although breathing is just an ordinary affair for most of us, in swara yoga it is considered to be very important; it is a language by itself.

Swara as the soul

In the swara shastras, the swara has been considered to be the form of the soul, the *atma*. In swara yoga, individual breath is considered to be connected with the cosmic breath, the cosmic prana. That is why swara has been described as synonymous with the soul, the Brahman, the Vedas and the shastras.

To study the science of swara yoga and to perfect the practice, will take a lifetime. Only a properly qualified student is able to attain perfection in this branch of knowledge, but it is useful for ordinary people as well.

Liberation by swara

According to the swara shastra, liberation is achieved by knowledge of the swara. A swara yogi becomes omniscient. He is able to know the past events as well as the future. Lord Shankara considered the knowledge of swara to be the best of all knowledge and the greatest of all treasures. The Vedas, Vedanta, shastras and Puranas are all included in the science of the swara. All the activities of an individual, like waking, sleeping, eating, excretion, depend upon the functioning of the swara. The swara is the sustainer and supporter of the entire creation and it is only through the swara that its destruction is determined. The entire universe depends upon the swara.

One who knows the science of swara, its different forms, its functions, its uses and its results is a yogi and a jnani. A

study of swara yoga is extremely useful and leads to success and great accomplishments.

NADA YOGA

Seed of creation

According to nada yogis and the scriptures dealing with the subject of nada yoga, the ultimate, the transcendental sound or the *nadabrahma* is the seed from which the entire creation has evolved. It means that prakriti and the material, mental, psychic and intellectual universe are an outcome of nadabrahma. This is the ultimate belief of nada yogis. In this context, a study of the Upanishads is recommended, with special reference to the *Nada Upanishad*, *Bindu Upanishad* and *Hamsopanishad*.

The original sound

A nada yogi believes that the whole macrocosmic universe is a projection of sound vibrations. In the Bible there is also a reference, “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God.” This word is called the *nada* or the *shabda*.

The eternal or original nada has the highest rate of frequencies and vibration. When any object vibrates at a tremendous and unimaginable speed, it becomes still. It means that the highest point of motion and vibration is stillness. These vibrations either do not vibrate at all or they vibrate at such a high frequency that it is beyond the reach of the human faculty.

Search for the cosmic sound

Nada yoga sadhana means the search for transcendental sound. It is a means to discover the primal and the finest, the ultimate and the innermost sound, the shabda. In order to discover this non-empirical sound, the process has to start from awareness of gross sound and move progressively into the deeper realms of consciousness.

In summary, there are four stages in the manifestation of sound according to its frequency, subtlety and grossness. The transcendental sound with the highest rate of frequency is *para*, the quality of the soul. *Pashyanti*, the mental or inner sound that can only be seen and not heard, has less frequency and more grossness than the *para*. *Madhyama*, the subtler quality of the vocal organs with very minute vibrations, is produced in the act of a whisper. *Vaikhari* is the gross quality of physical organs.

Use of symbols

Before the consciousness can finally be attuned with the transcendental nada, different symbols are introduced in order to help the aspirant progress through the different psychic and non-physical sounds. The mind rests on these symbols and goes in quickly with their help. These sounds are experiences of the deeper layers of consciousness, belonging to annamaya kosha, pranamaya kosha and manomaya kosha. These sounds are not imaginary. They may be understood as the vibrations of different spheres of one's existence.

The physical, pranic, mental, supra-mental, and the ananda or the atmic, are the five spheres of one's existence. In different spheres of existence, different sounds are heard. There are physical sounds first, but when consciousness becomes fine and transcends the physical plane, it will come in touch with the subtle sounds of movements of pranic consciousness in the physical body.

Nada in the sphere of consciousness

In the practice of nada yoga, the manifestation of nada takes place in accordance with the relationship established between the mind and the other spheres of consciousness. For instance, if the mind or consciousness is rooted in the physical body, by closing your ears you will hear the sounds or vibrations produced by the movements of the heart, lungs, brain, circulation of the blood and the process of metabolism and catabolism that are going on inside the body.

If consciousness is dwelling in pranamaya kosha and has penetrated it, you will hear the nada of a flute accompanied by many more sounds. If the mind has gone deeper into anandamaya kosha, then the other sounds will disappear and in its place, the effect of nada yoga will remain. It is difficult to tell which particular nada belongs to a particular sphere. The nada is always there but we just do not perceive it. Like a high frequency radio that has not been finely adjusted, the mind is as yet attuned only to the sensorial impulses.

The ultimate nada that manifests in the highest sphere of consciousness is unspeakable. It is a transcendental sound coming from the sphere beyond anandamaya kosha. ‘Transcendental’ means that which is beyond the category of the mind, feeling, emotion, senses and the body. You cannot comprehend it by the karmendriyas, jnanendriyas, the mind, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, not even in dream.

Union in the highest state of nada

A nada yogi believes that the actual point where the individual consciousness should fuse is in the highest state of nada. The *sadhaka* or aspirant realizes his higher consciousness on nada, the transcendental nada, and sees the whole universe in the form of sound. When the mind is absorbed in nada, there are no vrittis. The mind is still like a crystal clear pool of water. The reflection seen inside is the nada. There is union of consciousness and energy. There is *yoga*, union.

KRIYA YOGA

Awakening kundalini

In our age of complexities, kriya yoga is one of the most powerful systems for awakening man’s spiritual potential, the kundalini. There are many techniques that can be used for this purpose and all have their own place, but the practices of kriya yoga are superior by far. They are more systematic and they are easily accessible for the people of our age. Kriya

yoga fulfils the most important need of mankind, to awaken kundalini in a smooth and natural way.

Moving the mind

Kriya yoga is one of the easiest and most powerful of the methods known to us in yoga. The kriya practices neither demand one steady pose nor concentration of the mind. Even if one is unable to concentrate on one point and the mind is jumping all about, it does not matter in kriya. We let it do so. In fact, in kriya you are not trying to withdraw your mind to one-pointedness, you are actually trying to make movements. You create motion in the realm of your mind. You do not concentrate the mind but move the mind from one point to another in a particular order, which you should not lose sight of. This is very important for the development of the brain, for the activity of the nervous system, and for awakening the energies in the brain. In this way, the mind becomes automatically peaceful, and separation of mind and spirit takes place. You do not have to strive very hard.

Ancient initiation

Kriya yoga is an ancient initiation and practice, for which adequate preparation is required. A series of twenty or more kriyas are learnt and practised sequentially in a daily sadhana. Those people who are eager to follow this systematic path should first of all learn asanas, pranayamas, hatha yoga, ajapa japa, breath consciousness, mudras, and bandhas for a period of four to five months regularly and after that they must take up the practices of kriya yoga from a qualified master.

Suitable for everyone

No consideration of diet, status of life, caste, creed or religious affiliations, age, mental condition, normal or abnormal is a barrier. Everybody can do kriya yoga. Everybody is qualified. After all, what qualifications do you really need for kriya yoga? An imperfect mind, an

imbalanced mind, a fluctuating mind, a depressed mind, a mind that is completely broken and torn into pieces, is all the qualification you need for kriya yoga. You don't need an emancipated mind, a calm and quiet and transcendent mind. You need a mind that has to grow.

I sometimes confront cases suffering from suicidal complexes and terrific neuroses. In such cases, I do not teach them the whole of kriya yoga, because it is not possible for them to understand. However, I teach them one or two of the kriyas and I know they gain a new lease on life. Wherever you are, whoever you are, if you are convinced that kriya yoga is for you, you should take it up. Start preparations immediately.

Clearer, greater vision

The kriyas are very powerful! They can make you free from the burdens of karma of lives and lives, and render your consciousness clearer and purer, so you can have a greater vision of life.

KUNDALINI YOGA

Main purpose of life

Everybody, whether householder or sannyasin, must remember that the awakening of kundalini is the prime purpose of human incarnation. All the pleasures of sensual life, which we are enjoying now, are intended only for this purpose. Whatever happens in spiritual life is related to the awakening of kundalini. The goal of every form of spiritual life, whether you call it samadhi, nirvana, moksha, communion, union, kaivalya, liberation, or whatever, is in fact awakening of kundalini.

Awakening the superconscious state

The purpose of kundalini yoga is to awaken the powerful consciousness or the psychic consciousness in man in order to make it possible for him to have the vision of a greater

reality in himself, the superconsciousness. For a kundalini yogi, the supreme consciousness represents the highest possible manifestation of matter in this physical body. This psychic, supersensitive or transcendental power is the ultimate point of human evolution.

Transformation from gross to subtle

Kundalini yoga is not abstract. It considers this physical body as its base, and through the gradual process of evolution, the matter of this physical body can be transformed into subtle forces.

Metamorphosis of body and mind

The awakening of kundalini affects the whole area of the human mind and behaviour. A metamorphosis takes place. There is a dawning of creative intelligence and an awakening of supramental faculties. There is even the possibility of restructuring the entire physical body. By activating kundalini, you may become anything in life. Anyone can awaken his or her kundalini. It is not limited to poets, painters, warriors, writers, saints or sadhus.

Sustained awakening

It has always been possible to invoke kundalini by unsystematic, drastic and even tragic means. However, full and sustained awakening never occurs in this way. Herbs, drugs and chemicals, sleep and food deprivation, and even intense and prolonged pain may give some glimpses, but these experiences are never sustained and cannot be directed or controlled.

Necessary preparation

If kundalini shakti is released when the nadis are blocked and weak, you will not be able to handle the experience. Therefore, you must prepare yourself thoroughly by devotion to regular, daily sadhana, under the guidance of a guru. The entire body must be purified by the practices of hatha

yoga, and the mind by the practice of mantra and karma yoga. When the pranas are brought under control through pranayama techniques, and when the diet is pure, you will be able to direct your prana into the seat of kundalini at mooladhara chakra.

Making the unconscious conscious

Of the hundreds and thousands of centres in the brain, the most important centre is *hiranyagarbha*, the golden womb. It is well-protected, well-guarded, and is currently unconscious. If that particular centre can be brought into operation, the supreme knowledge can be made available. The whole mystery is there. The whole treasure is there. All of man's great miracles are dormant there. Everything that has happened in the remote past, in recent times, and whatever will happen in the future, springs from this storehouse of cosmic consciousness.

This particular centre in us is not sleeping, not inactive; it is only unconscious, we are not aware of it. Direct awakening of that central part of the brain is not possible by any method. It can only be awakened if you are able to activate the different centres in the body connected to it.

As kundalini ascends through sushumna nadi, it passes through each of the chakras that are interconnected with the silent areas of the brain. Then, when kundalini is established in ajna chakra, the lower form of energy is withdrawn. The small generators are switched off and the greater energy begins to flow through these nadis, awakening the different zones in the brain and supplying energy to the whole physical body. With the awakening of kundalini, there is an explosion in the brain as the dormant or sleeping areas start releasing their full potential.

Becoming an embodiment of divinity

Once the great shakti awakens, man is no longer a gross physical body operating with a lower mind and low-voltage prana. Instead, every cell of the body is charged with the

high-voltage prana of kundalini; and when total awakening occurs, man becomes a junior god, an embodiment of divinity.

LAYA YOGA

State of laya

Laya is the state of mind when one forgets all objects of the senses and becomes absorbed only in the object of meditation. Laya enables one to have perfect control over the five tattwas, the mind and the indriyas. The fluctuations of mind cease. The mind, body and prana are entirely subdued. For laya yoga, shambhavi mudra is an effective method. Trataka plays a vital part in attaining success in laya. Eventually, through the practice of laya yoga, the yogi becomes established in samadhi. He becomes a jivanmukta.

Yoga of dissolution

In Sanskrit, the word *laya* means dissolution; dissolution of something into something, but what makes it different from samadhi? What makes laya different from superconsciousness? After all, all the yogas should lead to a higher state where the dissolution of lower consciousness takes place. Whether you practise pranayama or you practise kriya yoga or you practise meditation on God or guru, when your individual consciousness merges into superconsciousness, is it in a state of dissolution, or is it in a state of laya? Is there no difference between kundalini yoga, laya yoga and kriya yoga? There are many methods that can be practised and that are taught for the dissolution of individual consciousness at a very heightened level. When all of that has been said, laya yoga is still a yoga by itself and we have to understand this.

Laya is different from samadhi or superconsciousness. In a superconscious state, one does not become unconscious. One does not lose one's individual consciousness, but remains completely aware of all that is happening, inside as

well as outside. On the path that leads to superconsciousness, one must proceed with great alertness so that one's individual consciousness does not get suspended or dissolved. However, in laya yoga, the individual consciousness is made to lose contact with the internal as well as the external, yet, the brain and consciousness are awake at a very high level when unconsciousness takes place. Laya really begins here; however, this is not the final stage of laya yoga. If we say that this is laya yoga we are setting a limit to the evolution of individual knowledge or individual consciousness.

Clear guidelines

There are clear guidelines for the practice of laya yoga regarding preparation, diet and many minor instructions. I never teach it to those who are celibate. Laya yoga should not be practised by unmarried persons. If you are not married and you want to practise laya yoga you should first marry, and then practise it. You must unburden the posterior pituitary from those congested progesterone and oestrogen hormones and eliminate them so that the flower opens. There are certain toxins in the system, not only in the stomach, blood, heart, lungs, but also in your nervous system and brain. You have to eliminate all those toxins. It is only then that laya yoga is going to bring that serenity and total homogeneous dissolution.

Hatha yoga as preparation

For those who want to practise laya yoga, it is very important that they should practise hatha yoga first to purify the whole system. If you do not practise hatha yoga and feel that you can get along without it, then the nervous imbalance, either the sympathetic or the parasympathetic imbalance, will manifest. Maybe you will become schizophrenic, idiotic or absolutely violent. Once you have achieved a balance in your nervous system, the practice of laya yoga involves a very important exercise

that creates a state of total unconsciousness, voluntary unconsciousness. For this, you must practise vajroli and certain pranayamas.

Attainment of psychic powers

The scriptures talk about laya yoga with great respect, but laya yoga has one great disadvantage, it takes you away from the Self because it develops supernatural and extrasensory qualities in you. It may be due to the practices involved, but laya definitely develops some of the ultrasonic or parapsychological brain centres, and siddhis are developed. All psychic powers, whether they are high or low in nature, divert the attention of human consciousness from the higher Self, and constitute the greatest barrier to progress. Therefore, laya yoga should only be practised with a guru and in his presence.

DHYANA YOGA

Tool of evolution

The science of meditation is the ultimate object of yoga and a tool in man's hand for his higher evolution in order to channelize and polarize the energies of the whole universe and of the whole of mankind.

Transformation of mind

In the last fifty years or so, yoga has come to rescue man from his crisis and has induced significant changes in many parts of the world. Although hatha yoga, the physical side of yoga, has become very popular, in comparison, few have been exposed to the most important branch of yoga, dhyana yoga. What does meditation do? The great seers of old and the modern day scientists have said that during the practices of meditation, a great transformation is taking place in the practitioner's mind that facilitates the process of evolution in man's consciousness. It is this yoga that is going to play a major role in deciding man's future destiny.

Interconnectedness

Through meditation, one realizes by direct experience that one is a necessary, intimate and important part of the universe. One starts to relate deeply to everything that exists. They are no longer separate entities. You are 'That'. This is a mystical state of meditation. Meditation must bring us to a higher experience, wherein we identify ourselves with something higher. What am I? I am That; and that Consciousness, with a capital 'C', is ultimately what meditation has to bring us to. 'I am That. I am that infinite consciousness, that transcendental consciousness. I am that consciousness, that consciousness is me.' This is the knowledge that must dawn at the end of meditation.

Inner awareness

When you are able to transcend the world of the senses; when you are able to transcend the world of experiences for a short period; when you are able to transcend the memories of the past, the anticipations of the future and the anxieties of the present; when you are able to forget, for the time being, your name and form, your placement, your position, your environment; and when you are able to become aware of something inside yourself, that is called meditation. Dhyana, chan, zen, meditation, total attention, total awareness, it is all the same thing.

Meditation is a process of total perception, total consciousness and unconditional awareness by which we are trying to come closer to our higher self. In the practice of meditation, one tries to acquire complete knowledge of one's mind and tries at the same time to acquire a system of training and regulating the infinite capacities and potentialities of the mind.

What one does in meditation is to make the body quiet, bring about a state of tranquillity and equilibrium in one's pranic system, expose the whole mind before oneself and then try to awaken the consciousness from a lower level to a higher one. One may think that meditation is very difficult

but be assured that it is not; the difficulty is finding the technique that is suitable for a person. The techniques are different for everybody.

By *dhyana yoga*, the yoga of meditation, you should not understand that you close your eyes and enter into a state of total darkness and unconsciousness. Dhyana means an expanded state of mind, awakening of one's full creative potential. Dhyana does not mean the tranquillity of the senses, that is *pratyahara*, nor does it mean *shoonyata* or unconsciousness. When you switch off your mind, you are not practising dhyana yoga. Dhyana is a dynamic state of awareness. It is a state of awareness in which you know nothing of this lower existence, but you know that everything is one. Dhyana is at once total awareness of the one, and total unawareness of everything else but the one.

In meditation the light of the soul does not get extinguished, you do not switch off the light. On the contrary, you make it more luminous. You extend this light further into the mind, into the nucleus of your existence, into the centre of your personality and a great revolution takes place within. The death of normal consciousness takes place and at that time, the inner consciousness blooms. When inner awareness flourishes, external awareness, which leads to the knowledge of time, space and objectivity, dies. So, here in meditation you die and you are reborn.

Meditation is not necessarily concentration on God, but it is realization of the inner dimension of your own personality. You have much more within than you know. Man is infinite. His mind is powerful and capable, but he hasn't realized this yet. The individual awareness is potentially cosmic. Therefore, it is very important that everybody should devote ten minutes each day to its discovery. With meditation, dhyana yoga, you start a new chapter in your life. Once you are involved in dhyana yoga, doing your practices in the correct way, your experiences and your personality will become steady and lasting. Your attitude towards yourself and your life will be fantastic.

Evolution of consciousness

Meditation is related to the evolution of human consciousness. We are now in the first chapter of spiritual life and in this human incarnation, the sole objective for us should be to evolve spiritually. To evolve spiritually means to be able to understand what lies within us: beyond the body, beyond the senses, beyond the mind and beyond the ordinary understanding.

This consciousness, knowledge, understanding and cognition, which you are aware of now, are not the ultimate. There is something more than this. Beyond name and form, beyond subject and object, and beyond the senses with which you are capable of understanding, seeing and recognizing, there is something more. You don't merely exist for the external life. This external existence and this external experience are not the ultimate. There is something beyond it. There are layers and layers of experiences and you can experience almost every level of your existence through the process of meditation.

Flowing into dhyana

When dharana has been achieved, you start developing and expanding the consciousness. Previously, you were contracting your consciousness from a circle to a point, now again this point is to be developed into the form of a circle. The difference is that the first circle was the objective circle, the finite circle and this is an infinite circle. This is the process of expansion of consciousness where the sense experiences are completely absent. Therefore, in the practice of yoga, meditation does not only mean that you close your eyes and see something. 'Meditation' is not the right word, as it is not meditation, it is complete awareness. Therefore, when you practise either meditation or awareness, you must start with those practices that withdraw your awareness. Then the mind is fixed on some object, so that the mind and awareness also become a point. Then, you try to expand this point to the maximum possible extent and the experience

of dhyana, meditation, takes place. Here, yoga and Vedanta meet each other.

Balance in meditation

Meditation by itself does not help entirely because, through meditation, you clean your body, mind and consciousness, but again your karmas accumulate impressions. Your emotional personality gets confused and your thinking becomes erroneous again. It is like cleaning a room and then putting the dirt back inside. In the same manner, you are trying to clear your personality of dross, tensions and afflictions, but what is happening is that the karma and samskaras that you are clearing out on one side are being reintroduced on the other side.

This is the reason why a yogi who practises meditation must also practise karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga. It is through karma yoga that you stop the samskaras, you stop the effect of karma going into the deepest core of your personality. There are hundreds and thousands of people throughout the world who practise meditation, but are not happy with the results because they think that meditation in itself should solve all their problems. However, please remember that meditation should be practised side by side with the other forms of yoga.

10

The Ultimate Yoga

1999

In order to succeed in yoga and in life, personal attainment and prosperity are not enough. We need three things: commitment, dedication and devotion to that which is beyond ourselves. Unless we are able to develop these three qualities in our yoga and in our lives, we can never find satisfaction or fulfilment. Real success is not measured by status, monetary gain or any personal achievement, but by how much one is able to offer others in their time of need, for their upliftment and for the removal of their distress.

Man is not an island or a separate unit unto himself. We are all part and parcel of this world, of this vast universe. We are in the universe and the universe is in us. No one is in any way different from another. All are comprised of the same consciousness and energy, the same five elements. All breathe the same air, drink the same water, eat the same food, and walk the same earth. All feel the same emotions and think the same thoughts. So, what is it that makes us different? Our illusion about self, our sense of individuality, self-importance, egocentricity; these block our vision of totality, of oneness with humanity and with the entire creation.

When will we be free? Freedom is not a commodity that can be purchased politically, socially or professionally. Freedom is an understanding of ourselves in relation to

others, the part in relation to the whole. We will never be free until we learn to share with others. There is always someone with less than us, no matter how little we have. There are thousands of ways to share our knowledge, abilities, facilities, experience, faith, belief, money, property, food, clothes, tools, books and ideas.

It is not by accumulating and enriching ourselves that we become free. We become free by giving what we have to others. The different ways and forms of our sharing are the measure of our freedom, of our capacity to realize God. By God, I do not mean that Holy Father who lives up somewhere in heaven, but that divinity which resides in us and in all beings, sentient and insentient, in equal measure.

It is of no use to build up anything for ourselves. All these accumulations become our bondage, our barrier. They keep us fenced off from the higher reality, the vision of totality. The more we give, the greater we become, because we learn to see ourselves in others. Their suffering becomes our suffering and their joy our joy.

A life of selfish acquisition and material satisfaction is not worth living or dying for. At the end of it, what will we have that is still ours? Nothing – no money, no possessions, no property, no house, no car, no job, no family, no relation, no friend, will ever pass out of this life with us. The only thing that will go with us on that last day will be our karmas, our deeds, whether positive or negative, selfish or unselfish, and nothing else.

That is why in this life it is very important to always be on the lookout for opportunities to give, to serve and to contribute something for the welfare and the betterment of another. This is the way to attain happiness, fulfilment and transcendence, not only in this life, but in the life to come. With every positive deed, we remove the shackles of ten years of negative deeds. We become brighter, younger, healthier and more vital.

What is it that makes us dull, old, sick, and oppressed? The cause is not external; it is our internal limitations that

bind us to a narrow, selfish view of life. That is the cause of all our suffering. In order to remove our suffering, we must remove our limitations. We must live to help and serve others and not ourselves. We must reach beyond our immediate family, our personal needs and develop a broader identity that encompasses the entire humanity, the entire creation, and the entire cosmos. This is freedom – not any political, social or religious ideology.

I have taught only one yoga, that which leads to freedom. All others are paths of bondage. Please do not think that I am speaking against any yoga teacher or institution, but I feel that the present concept and direction of yoga must change. Yoga must be unified, freed of separate ideals, power struggles and narrow concepts of spiritual attainment.

Attitudes must change, barriers must come down, so that a new yoga can emerge. This will be the yoga of unity, of giving, of sharing and uplifting, as one team. As organs and parts of one body, we must work together in one connected and concerted effort to serve humanity, to share our knowledge, our gifts, our capacities, our labour, for the common good, for a better world.

When we are able to see the disease, disharmony and distress of others as our own, and begin to alleviate and remove it by our united effort, then our yoga will need only one banner. Call it freedom, call it *mukti*, call it bliss. If we are involved in any yoga for our personal development, knowledge and evolution, that yoga is not going to help us. Finally, we will have to leave it and search for another path.

The ways of the world are many, but the way to God, to spirit, to divinity, is one. Dedication to the upliftment of others, seeing others in ourselves and ourselves in others; this is the ultimate yoga. There is no other way to change our limited egocentric vision to a cosmic vision. This is the path and this is the yoga of the new millennium – call it ‘freedom yoga’.

There is no need to waste time in practising other yogas. Life does not have enough days, hours and minutes to

perform all the good deeds that need to be done in order to balance the bad deeds that were done before. In this birth, we have the opportunity to serve the poor and downtrodden by offering food, clothes, money, medicine, books, toys, tools, building materials, bicycles, cows, bullocks, and other things which can help to remove the distress from the lives of individuals, families and communities. This is my path, and this is the yoga that I wish to propagate in the new millennium for the benefit of all mankind and the highest attainment of yoga. There is no other nirvana, no other enlightenment. This is the way to freedom.

It is not my intention to insult or offend anyone's view, concept or practice of yoga. However, we must bear in mind that the yogas expounded in the twentieth century were suited to the needs and evolution of humanity for that period. Therefore, the form of yoga was limited to self-discipline, self-introspection and self-improvement. Now, yoga is taking another step forward. It is expanding beyond the personal, selfish and narrow confines of individual practice, teachings and ideals, to encompass a broad spectrum of devotion, dedication and integral participation in human emancipation.

This is not my order. It has been decided by forces that are beyond me. There will be no other way to evolve through yoga. All will eventually have to pull down their separate fences and signboards and begin to work together in one united, consecutive effort to uplift and free humanity from all forms of deprivation and degradation. The misery of others is our misery. To free another of his misery is our freedom, our happiness and our fulfilment. What to speak of freeing whole families, communities, states, nations and worlds? Freedom is infinite for those who walk in the light of this yoga, who take up the path of giving and sharing with one another, who dedicate and devote themselves, their time and their money to the upliftment of others.

Part 4

The Journey Continues

11

Yoga for the Twenty-First Century

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

The original ideas of yoga are not known to many people. Although a basic understanding and appreciation of yoga has emerged in the last fifty years, misconceptions about the purpose and the aspirations of yoga still exist. Even after fifty years of yoga spreading throughout the world, it is still confused with religion. In addition, people think of yoga as either hatha yoga, practices related to the body; raja yoga, practices of the mind; bhakti yoga, the yoga of emotion and devotion; jnana yoga, kriya yoga or kundalini yoga. Thus, yoga remains confined to the garb of the physical body and the mind, and does not go beyond. This is a shortcoming for those who do not understand or appreciate the purpose and direction of yoga.

Today, people come to yoga for a multitude of reasons related to the body, health, stress, therapy, meditation, or simply to learn something new, without having any specific goal, aim or aspiration. Even if you look at your own practice of yoga, how far has it progressed in that field? Yoga is commonly seen as a practice for better health, a better quality of mind and behaviour; a practice for reducing the levels of stress and anxiety, unloading the mind-stuff and be free. Beyond these aims, and that of religion, there is no understanding of yoga. This yoga that is limited to the physical and mental body or identified with religion, is not the complete yoga. The broad vision of yoga for the twenty-

first century includes yoga philosophy, yoga psychology, applied yoga, and yoga ecology and lifestyle.

In Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, teachings in two systems of yoga are given. One is the general system taught through the Bihar School of Yoga and includes asana, pranayama, therapy, teacher training courses, and so on. The other teaching is classical and takes place through Bihar Yoga Bharati, the yoga university, whereby the effort is to understand the deeper principles and ideas of yoga, and the way to apply them properly in life.

The Bihar School of Yoga represents the effort to propagate yoga for the benefit of all, regardless of whether one is interested in the philosophy or not. Bihar Yoga Bharati is an extension of the Bihar School of Yoga, in which the higher, classical and true vision of yoga can be realized and understood. This includes the teaching of yoga philosophy, yoga psychology, applied yoga and yoga ecology, leading to an understanding of the completion and fullness of the yogic vision.

YOGA PHILOSOPHY

To understand the complete yoga it is essential to go back to the original thoughts and ideas that founded it. The ideas that have established the principles, practices, theories and aspirations of yoga are only four; which Lord Shiva imparted to his consort and disciple, Parvati. This collection of ideas is known as 'darshan', a word often translated as philosophy. The meaning of *darshan*, however, is to realize, to see, to experience, whereas the meaning of philosophy is 'love for knowledge'. *Yoga darshan* is to have a glimpse, experience and realization of yoga as a living experience. You become what you are seeing or experiencing. Thus, darshan cannot be directly translated as philosophy, as it is a sequence of realizations that make you aware of yourself, your individual nature, and your connection with the universal self, the Higher Self. The foundation of yoga darshan is based on four basic ideas:

Nasti maya samah pasho

There is no greater bondage than maya.

Nasti yogatparam balam

There is no greater strength than yoga.

Nasti jnanatparo bandhuh

There is no greater friend and well-wisher of an individual than the wisdom one possesses

Nahankaratparo ripuh

There is no greater enemy than one's own ego.

These four ideas gave birth to the ideology, development and practices of yoga.

Individual spirit and universal spirit

In yoga, it is said that the individual spirit within all beings is known as *atma* or *jivatma*, which is an expression and reflection of the universal consciousness, known as Paramatma. *Param* means great, *atma* is spirit. *Paramatma* is the Great Spirit. The universal spirit, Paramatma, represents one end of the scale, and the individual spirit, *atma*, represents the other end of the scale.

The universal spirit or consciousness is formless, nameless and attributeless, yet it has every potential. The nature of the universal spirit has the three main potencies of all-pervading knowledge, all-pervading ability, and the capacity to manifest in many forms in all directions and all parts of space: omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence.

The Great Spirit, Paramatma, has no shape and no form, yet the potencies within it create its nature of generation, organization, and destruction or transformation. These three potencies give that Great Spirit the identity of G-O-D. Therefore, in yoga, the concept of the individual and God is clear. Yoga does not speak of God as Rama, Krishna or Shiva. Yoga speaks of Paramatma, the unmanifest potential, and *jivatma*, the manifest individual.

The effort to realize the vastness of the self is the process of yoga. In this process of developing sequential experiences and realizations about life and consciousness, you must know the restrictions placed on life by maya, which are the cause of bondage.

No greater bondage than maya

Maya limits the omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence of the universal spirit. Maya is the covering that separates us from our identification with the higher nature. The word *maya* is defined as delusion, illusion, or imagination. The universal spirit is contained by maya in an individual being. Thus, the potency of the universal becomes you, confined, limited and contained by maya. On one side is you and on the other side is the Great Spirit, and that is how yoga views the relationship between the individual and the universe.

Yoga says the universal potential is contained in the pot of maya, and this creation, world, body and individual are a form of maya. Maya is like a covering over the luminosity of the spirit, the luminosity of light. Throw five layers of cloth on a light bulb. The light will not shine through the layers. The light will continue to glow; however, it will not shine through the material. In the same way, maya has created a covering on the luminosity of the spirit. As the luminosity of the spirit reduces, there is a reduction of knowledge, capabilities, possibilities, potentials, abilities and strengths. There is a reduction of the ability to be in all spaces, and you become fixed in one place, one time, one space, as one object. What was unlimited becomes finite and limited. Yogis say that if you can manage the effects and influences of maya and remove these coverings, then you can again explore and experience your universal nature. Yoga leads you to the knowledge of the real you, free from the blocks created by maya. Maya, which contains and gives a form to the freedom and free spirit of the individual, has five roles to play. The five blocks and coverings of maya are:

1. *Avidya*: Limitation of knowledge is avidya. From the state of knowing everything, you are limited to a part of

vidya. What you know becomes reduced, confined and limited to a state where you do not know anything. Despite having the intellect, the brain and the logical faculties, you do not know how to act, respond, correct yourself, restrain yourself or manage yourself. All that knowledge has gone, even in the so-called super intellectuals of the world.

The confusion, conflict, expectations and desires that you face in life, in your relationships, family, the social environment, society, thought patterns and personal philosophies, attitudes and awareness, stem from avidya. They become the stressors that focus and direct the faculties of the mind in an outward direction. Then the contact with the internal dimension is lost and broken.

2. *Asmita*: 'I-ness' or the 'me, me' attitude is asmita. It is the manifestation of selfishness, self-centredness, egotism, the personal sense of superiority and the need to be recognized as somebody special. Asmita is a projection of yourself and the importance of 'me'. That is ego, asmita, which identifies you and binds you to the world of senses and sense objects, and is the barrier between you and the universal self, like a closed doorway to the spirit.

3. *Raga*: The *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali say (2:7): *Sukhanushayi ragah* – "Attraction for pleasure in sense objects is raga." Raga leads to bondage. It is like two pieces of a magnet coming together. There is so much pull and attraction between the two that you have to use all your strength to separate them. Raga is attraction and attachment to pleasure. Attraction leads to attachment.

4. *Dvesha*: Dvesha is repulsion and avoiding anything that brings discomfort in your search for pleasure. The search for pleasure is directed outwards to the sense objects. If something or somebody is a barrier between you and your quest for pleasure, that object or person becomes the cause of your experience of repulsion, dvesha.

5. *Abhinivesha*: People translate 'abhinivesha' as fear of death, though in reality it is the fear of the unknown. In the unknown, you lose awareness of the self, become insecure,

and feel uncomfortable, as everything is strange. In the state of abhinivesha, you lose your balance, awareness and clarity, and begin to fantasize and imagine things. When this happens, psychiatrists are required to help manage the condition.

The five veils, avidya, asmita, raga, dwesha, and abhinivesha constitute maya, just as five fingers are part of one hand. These five, as part of the hand of maya, provide strength to maya, and limit the individual self. These are the five coverings of maya, which limit and restrict the expression of luminosity of the individual spirit. Therefore it is said: *Nasti maya samah pasho* – “There is no greater bondage or fetter than maya.”

No greater power than yoga

While there is no greater bondage than maya, there is no greater strength than yoga – *Nasti yogatparam balam*. Maya cannot be cut through with scissors, a razor blade, an axe or even a chainsaw. Maya has to be cut with yoga, as yoga has the potency and the strength to tear through the fetters of maya. Therefore, it is said that there is no greater force or power to deal with the forces of maya than yoga.

No greater friend than wisdom

There is no greater friend and well-wisher than your own inherent wisdom. Whenever you have suffered in life, come across struggles and difficulties, or found barriers that have left you wondering what to do, there has been the absence of knowledge in that moment. If knowledge, *vidya*, understanding and wisdom were there, you would know how to deal with the situation in the right manner and it would never become an obstruction.

In personal life, difficulties in relationships arise when wisdom is lost and the ego, the self-image, self-prestige, selfishness and personal desires take over. Whenever there is wisdom there is always the right attitude, performance and action; in the absence of wisdom, there is folly after

folly. Therefore, you must always retain your connection with *jnana*, wisdom, and not lose your awareness of it. Always keep your wisdom in view just as a mother keeps her child in view, no matter where she is. Even if she is at a circus or a fair with thousands of people around her and the child running from one ride to another, she knows where her child is. In the same manner, as you come across your friends and adversaries, and associate and interact with them, keep your wisdom in sight at all times.

Knowledge leads one to the light, yet it can also become a greater darkness than light if it is not applied or understood properly. There has to be resilience in knowledge. It should take the form of any container that it is placed in, just like water. Knowledge has to have the nature of fluidity, the resilience of wisdom, not the stiffness of the intellect and logic.

No greater enemy than ego

There is no greater enemy than the ego. If you look at your own life, you will discover that whenever there has been suffering, your ego has raised its head and you have been hit hard. Whenever your ego has submitted itself, you have flowed in life. Your enemy is not another person, not your competitor. Your enemy is not your ill-wisher. Your enemy is your own ego. That is what does not allow you to grow. The ego is your enemy, which restricts you at every point in life and deludes the mind.

Realizing one's potential

The rishis and seers contemplated these four ideas, and questioned, "What is the aim of an individual?" It became clear that *atma anubhuti*, self-realization, is the aim. In this context, self-realization is a personal experience of overcoming maya to experience universality.

That is the journey of yoga, from the individual self to the realization and experience of the universal Self. Therefore, the goal of life becomes overcoming the

limitations of maya and realizing your potential as you move away from maya towards your transcendental nature. The process that takes you away from maya towards the universal nature is yoga. Thus, the basic philosophy of yoga is the discovery of the connection between the individual and the limitations that restrict the luminosity of the soul, the universal Self, the source of light within.

These four ideas form the foundation for the development of yoga philosophy. Yoga establishes you in wisdom, which becomes your friend and associate. Once you are established in wisdom, the last effect of maya, the ego, which is the enemy of life, is also destroyed. Thus, the finality of yoga lies in overcoming the effects of maya.

Two approaches to yoga

To attain its aim, yoga was classified in two parts: *antaranga yoga*, internal yoga, and *bahiranga yoga*, external yoga. All the branches of yoga are classified in one of these two groups.

1. *Antaranga yoga*: Internal yoga is the yoga in which sadhana is performed to bring about a positive transformation in the mind, prana and consciousness. Internal yoga is the yoga of sadhana that includes hatha yoga, raja yoga, kundalini yoga, mantra yoga, nada yoga, kriya yoga, and so forth. These practices allow one to regain harmony and balance, and explore one's inner nature. Asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana and dhyana form part of internal yoga, as they allow one to explore oneself and transform limitations into strengths. The practices of antaranga yoga allow one to access deeper dimensions of the mind, emotions and consciousness, and rectify the defects that are inherent in the human mind.

2. *Bahiranga yoga*: After having perfected internal yoga, one engages in outer yoga. The outer yogas constitute only three: karma yoga, jnana yoga and bhakti yoga, which are associated with the primary human faculties. Karma yoga is connected with action, performance and creativity. Jnana yoga is connected with wisdom, understanding, knowing

and applying. Bhakti yoga is the management of human emotions: sublimating the gross emotions that are the cause of strife, and finding the peaceful state of emotions in which the mood is not agitated. Karma, jnana, and bhakti yogas have been treated as *bahiranga* yoga; something that you express and not something that you practise. Karma yoga, jnana yoga and bhakti yoga are expressions of the achievement and attainment gained through the practice of the internal yogas.

Bahiranga yogas become the process to eradicate the *kleshas*, the suffering and pain caused by the five veils of maya. They are also used to dissociate from the expectations inherent in the interactions of life, so you are performing and engaged in karma, yet you are free from its effects. You are free from every kind of binding of maya. When you become free from the bindings of maya, you attain the Godhood state of consciousness. The higher reality, God, is that universal spirit, free from the suffering caused by maya, free from limitations placed by karmas and *samskaras*.

This is the twofold aspect of yoga philosophy: one, the superconscious and the individual self; two, maya and the practices to help overcome and manage the effects of maya. Once the lid on the individual self is removed, you move back into your original form and state.

YOGA PSYCHOLOGY

From the point you look at yourself with the lid of maya on, philosophy becomes psychology. When the *jiva*, the individual spirit, is covered by maya, then in the interaction with the world of senses and sense objects, the mind's nature is altered. The condition created in the mind due to the emergence of the five attributes of maya form a pattern of thinking that is continuously revolving around one thought, one experience, one idea. That creates a condition of mind akin to a vortex in still water. This vortex is known as *chinta*, worry. The covering of maya is like putting the blinders on

the horse's head. When the blinders are on, the horse only looks at what is in front. It cannot see to the sides. Similarly, the interaction of the individual with the world of the senses makes the individual see only the material dimension, developing a tunnel vision. This identification becomes the source of either raga or dwesha, and with this covering of maya, you experience stress in life. The mind thinks, 'If I don't have this, I'll be depressed. If I have this, I'll be happy. If I desire this and I don't get it, I will feel dejected, and if I get it, I'll be content.' The connection leads to infatuation. Thus, the first level of stress that maya brings begins with the interaction with the world of sense objects, when desires become the motivating factor to live and survive.

The second reason for stress is obsession with a thought or an experience. You desire to have the same pleasurable experience repeatedly; you do not allow yourself to mature beyond the experience that has given you pleasure. Even in meditation, if you have a nice experience once, you look for a repetition of the same experience in the subsequent sessions. The inability to welcome the present day becomes the cause of suffering and pain. That is the second level of stress.

The third level of stress is *vasana*, the ambitions and desires that at a certain age in life become strong, powerful and predominant. That peak, that need to fulfil the ambitions, arises in the absence of mental maturity. If there was mental maturity, then intense ambition would not be there, and instead, needs would be identified. In the absence of mental maturity, needs are not identified and ambitions are highlighted. Everyone harbours ambitions without actually analyzing their own strengths and weaknesses, without analyzing what they can achieve, what their ability is, and what they are just hoping for which will never materialize. It is like a lemon tree desiring to become an orange tree. Vasanas create stress, as they do not allow you to identify with your real need; they identify you with your ambition. This is *dukha*, suffering, due to a specific negation

or denial of something that you desire. The source of stress is *pareshani*, anxiety.

These are the different levels of stress identified by yoga psychology. These levels of stress then affect the different levels of mental perception and awareness.

Stress and mental awareness

The different levels of mental perception and awareness have been classified as the conscious, subconscious, unconscious, and superconscious dimensions of the mind.

The afflictions caused by the maya of avidya, asmita, raga, dwesha and abhinivesha germinate in the subconscious mind. It is the repository of all tensions and strife. If the conscious mind were to realize the actual suffering – the kleshas that the subconscious is going through due to avidya, asmita, raga, dwesha and abhinivesha – then most people would not be able to survive. Therefore, the conscious faculty is such that it only makes you aware of those things, situations or areas that connect you to the present time. The conscious awareness has blocked the flow of the impressions of the subconscious to allow survival and interaction in the world of sense objects.

The kleshas in the subconscious mind are known as sufferings; however, due to the conscious mind attaching itself with sense objects, the kleshas tend to take the form of external suffering, and you try to discover the causes of suffering outside of yourself. You say, “That man was not nice to me.” Your reaction, however, is not due to the other person. Your reaction is due to your ego, which is inside you, yet you are blaming the person outside. Whenever you blame somebody, know that you are blaming your own self and you are reacting to an emotion created within you. You are hating yourself in that moment. Instead of acknowledging that you are disliking yourself, you project your hate or dislike on the person in front of you. This is what is found in the study of psychology.

At any level of the mind, whether conscious, subconscious or unconscious, or in relation to any of the five coverings of

maya, whether avidya, asmita, raga, dwesha or abhinivesha, you will experience tension, worry, suffering and anxiety. These create spikes in the mind that are tamasic in nature and bring out the gross behaviour and qualities, where the senses and the sense objects are predominant. When the mind cannot handle those spikes, there is a destruction of the bridge that links the outer and the internal. Those are the moments when you feel helpless in the outside world, as that bridge between the outer world of the senses and the inner mind is the only link with the source of strength within, the sankalpa shakti.

Sankalpa shakti is the source of strength; it is the power of conviction. The power of conviction becomes strong and effulgent when the mind is at peace with itself, and it becomes weak when the mind is dissipated. When the mind is totally involved in the outer dimension, the sankalpa shakti is exhausted, and the dissipations begin.

Management of suffering

Understanding the kleshas is the beginning of yoga psychology, and the next step is their management. When the kleshas come to the surface of the subconscious before entering the conscious level, they create a *vritti*, a modification in consciousness. A klesha is recognized by the mind with the creation of a *vritti*, of which there are five: *pramana*, cognition; *vikalpa*, confusion; *nidra*, disconnection; *viparyaya*, false knowledge; and *smriti*, memory.

The concept of right and wrong develops according to these latent impressions. The traits of personality develop according to the impressions that are inherent in the mind as *samskaras*. Limitations are placed on human creativity as the latent *karmas* manifest and become part of one's destiny and decide what one can and cannot do in life.

Thus, kleshas are the cause of suffering, *samskaras* are the impressions, and *karmas* are the actions that decide what your life is going to be and how you are going to live it. Nevertheless, when you become aware of the influence of

karmas, samskaras, kleshas and their role in modifying your life, you can change them. Yoga generates awareness of the suffering and its effect on human nature. The moment you try to manage this suffering, the kleshas and the samskaras are altered, and the karmas are changed.

The kleshas that emerge from the subconscious mind and come to the surface of the conscious mind, make you aware of any situation which is creating conflict and confusion within you at that given moment. There are three stages of yoga psychology to manage this: pratyahara, pratipaksha bhavana, and the release of subconscious and unconscious material.

1. *Pratyahara*: In order to deal with the agitations and spikes of the mind, the process of pratyahara involves: i) relaxing the mind; ii) understanding and knowing the reason for the dissipation of the mind; iii) dealing with and treating the dissipation using a specific technique; and iv) focusing the mind.

The association of the mind with the sense objects does not allow it to relax. Relaxation here means to disconnect and separate from one's connections and the senses and sense objects. The idea of relaxation in yoga is to separate oneself from the areas of involvement, not to sleep. When we first came to the ashram, Sri Swamiji taught us to relax by changing the mental environment. This form of relaxation is the first step to stop the spikes and agitations of mind, which are created by avidya, asmita, raga, dwesha and abhinivesha.

The fault never lies in outside causes and reasons, remember that. The fault always lies in oneself. This fault can be observed through pratyahara and rectified through pratyahara. The mental conditioning is altered and rectified through pratyahara. You have to know the cause, and once you know the cause of dissipation, agitation and disturbance, then you will know the appropriate method by which that cause can be managed. Once that is achieved, then the mind is focused. This is the state of pratyahara. The purpose of yoga is to nullify the peaks of these vrittis, and the tendencies and traits that restrict your creative expression.

2. *Pratipaksha bhavana*: Pratyahara takes you to relaxation, to understanding, to management, and to focus. Then, the yamas and niyamas become part of *pratipaksha bhavana*, which is more internal, and involves cultivating the opposite virtue, to awaken the latent, positive and spiritual awareness. Only when pratyahara has corrected the mental conditioning can the mind become focused and one-pointed. That is the beginning of *dharana*, concentration. Up to pratyahara, you are working with the psychological expressions of the mind in relation to the senses, needs, desires, ambitions, aspirations, motivations, likes, dislikes, attachments and disassociations. Once a concentrated state of mind is achieved, and there is no fluctuation, distraction, dissipation, pull or attraction outside which can affect you, you practise *pratipaksha bhavana*, cultivation of the opposite virtue.

Identify a vice and cultivate the opposite virtue to counteract that. Identify a shortcoming and cultivate a strength to counteract that. *Pratipaksha bhavana* becomes successful in the state of *dharana*, as the ground is ready for any thought to germinate, and can be infused with the shakti of *sankalpa*; what the mind desires can be achieved. Therefore, *pratipaksha bhavana* is to be cultivated in the *dharana* state.

This also changes the expression of the *gunas*. The *gunas* are three: *rajas*, *tamas* and *sattwa*. The negative and destructive qualities are associated with *tamoguna*. The aggressive, dominant and power-craving nature is associated with *rajoguna*. Innocence, luminosity, simplicity, and humility are connected with *sattwa guna*. When you are planting the seed of positive expressions with the cultivation of the *pratipaksha bhavana*, you are strengthening your *sattwa* nature. Over a period of time, strengthening the *sattwa* nature will bring down the *tamasic* nature. Thus, the second stage of mind management after relaxation, according to yoga psychology, is the use of the yamas and niyamas in the practice of *pratipaksha bhavana*.

3. *Dhyana, releasing subconscious and unconscious material:* Endowed with *viveka*, discrimination, and *vairagya*, non-attachment, in the state of dharana, you move into *dhyana*, meditation, where you start clearing your samskaras and karmas. People think of dhyana as meditation on abstract ideas, on light or wind, this or that. That is not dhyana. Whatever you meditate upon using a symbol is pratyahara. If you focus on light, a point, the breath, mantra or a yantra, that is pratyahara.

The yogic texts are clear in their understanding: dharana is for the cultivation of positive and sattvic virtues in life, and dhyana is to eradicate the karmas, samskaras, and the effect of the instincts and instinctual behaviour. This includes impressions accumulated not only in this life, but also those that have entered the mind from previous existences. *Samskaras* are impressions formed in the mind that reflect in behaviour, attitude and character traits in life. Samskaras also manifest the basic instincts of life: *ahara*, craving; *nidra*, sleep; *bhaya*, insecurity; and *maithuna*, sensuality.

Cravings of unfulfilled desire, either of this lifetime or of a previous life, become the dominant traits of the human personality in this life. Insecurities, either of this life or a previous life, become the traits in this life. Consciousness does not begin and end in this life. In the continuity of consciousness, the impressions that the individual soul has received, the learning that it has received, the states of experiences that it has gone through, of struggle and achievement, have all created an individual nature. The clearing of samskaras and karmas allows the clearing of the individual traits that restrict the being in one dimension, and help one to move forward.

Only when instinctual behaviour, samskaras and karmas cease to function in a dynamic and aggressive manner does the state of samadhi take place, where there is total harmony in the behaviours of the mind, senses, universe, divinity and the individual.

The practices of dhyana are direct instructions from the guru to the disciple, not written in any textbook, since at this final state of releasing the karmas and samskaras you do not have any hold in the material dimension any more. The moment you eradicate your karmas and samskaras, you become one with the universal harmony, peace and light.

These are the three stages of yoga psychology. The first, pratyahara, is superficial. The second, pratipaksha bhavana, is more internal. The third is the clearing of karmas and samskaras to eventually realize the light. This is the system of yoga psychology, which then converts into applied yoga.

Improving relationships and interactions

In the process of yoga, there is greater focus on understanding and improving *sambandha*, relationships and interactions. It is not necessary to meditate a lot. Instead, develop the awareness of how you can improve your connection and interaction with people, society, the environment, nature, and the Higher Self. The moment you start to improve your connection and relationship with people and with yourself, you will discover peace, or *shanti*. Meditation will not give you shanti. Meditation can only make you aware of the causes of *ashanti*, absence of peace. In order to discover shanti, you have to improve your interactions, relationships and your moment-to-moment awareness.

With the improvement of interaction and communication there develops an understanding. This is the beginning of yoga psychology. Cultivation of understanding makes you the *drashta*, the witness, and you are able to observe your traits, limitations, attitudes and behaviours, and cultivate the appropriate qualities to manage the agitations of the mind in a better way. If the seeds of good qualities such as hope, love and aspiration are sown, and the effort is made to break away from the selfish needs, and explore the selfless interaction

with the community and people, there will be more shanti, within and without. With the understanding of this process, management of the mind begins and the systems of yoga psychology come into force.

APPLIED YOGA

First, the process of yoga philosophy must be understood. Then, there must be application of yoga psychology to rectify mental behaviour and mood, as they are the two most prominent issues to deal with on a daily basis. Once this cleaning of the mind has taken place, you enter the third level of yoga, which is applied yoga.

Applied yoga takes two forms: the first is basic, and the second is personal. In the first form of basic applied yoga, if you have a specific physical condition, an illness, a disease, or an imbalance, you use yogic practices to overcome and rectify that imbalance. You apply the yogic practices for a specific purpose and reason, for stress management, for correction of a behaviour trait, or alleviation of an illness or some physical condition that is limiting your expression and abilities. Whatever may be the physical, mental or psychological reason, if a specific group of practices is used to treat that particular condition, it becomes applied yoga. That is one level of understanding applied yoga.

This level of applied yoga is beneficial for those who do not have a background in yoga. This includes people from society in different fields and professions who find their life stressful and difficult. As they experience the symptoms of the mismanagement of stressors in their life, they come to yoga. For example, an individual who suffers from spondylitis performs asana, pranayama, yoga nidra, meditation and other yoga practices to help the physical condition. Once they feel better and are happy, they leave yoga. In the case of a respiratory disorder, the chest is opened up, the chest muscles are strengthened and the alveoli open. Once the respiration is improved the

yoga stops. The yoga practices are used to rectify a specific condition that was limiting the physical health. That is one level of applied yoga.

Science versus experience

The other level of applied yoga is the endeavour to understand scientifically how yoga works. This, however, is superficial, as the equipment is not yet available to show how yoga actually works. Yoga does not work only at the *annamaya* level, the level of the physical body. It works at the levels of *pranamaya kosha*, the energy dimension, *manomaya kosha*, the mental dimension, *vijnanamaya kosha*, the intuitive dimension, and *anandamaya kosha*, the bliss dimension. Any kind of scientific research can only monitor annamaya. The understanding of manomaya and pranamaya are speculative. People believe in science, therefore scientific research is conducted in yoga; however, to think that research will establish yoga as a science is a false notion.

The subject of scientific research into yoga is composed of questions related to the body: When you practise asana, what muscles are being used and compressed? What organs are being affected? What hormones are being secreted? What is the effect of those hormones on the brain? Will the insulin production start again? Will an injection be required? This so-called scientific research is basic as far as yoga is concerned. It is like the primary class of yoga. The higher class of yoga is the experience, and experience cannot be quantified through instruments.

If you are hungry, you eat, and you feel fulfilled. What kind of research can show you that you are experiencing fulfilment? Will you take an X-ray of the stomach to see to what extent the stomach is full and to determine the quantity of solids, water and air that are in the stomach? No. Your own personal experience decides if you are satisfied, not the X-ray vision of your stomach. Yoga relies on experience and this experience is multidimensional, whereas research only looks at the annamaya aspect. How can the annamaya

research describe the process of yoga that is taking place at manomaya, pranamaya, vijnanamaya and anandamaya levels?

For the sake of knowing the benefits of yoga and its application in society, research is necessary; nonetheless, knowing and experiencing are two different levels, and this is what you have to realize. What you experience is complete and what research tells you is limited. There cannot be research on the complete experience, at least not with the machines that are available today. What kind of machines can measure a yogi's experiences? None. All the machines today are only geared to provide comfort to human beings.

The discoveries that relate to one's life have to be experienced. Experience and observation are the first steps in any kind of discovery. Apples have fallen since the time of Adam and Eve, yet nobody discovered the force of gravity. The awareness of one person seeing the apple fall made him think, 'What makes the apple fall?' Gravity was not discovered in a lab. Gravity was discovered through observation. What one observes and what one experiences is the real thing, and not what one translates through the intellect. Scientific discoveries are translations of experience in an intellectual form, which can never be accurate or real.

In the minds of many people, applied yoga is associated with research. However, applied yoga is more accurately associated with the application of the yogic systems to improve the quality of life. This application can be in any field of society or an individual's life, which may include prisons, the army, railway workers, flight stewards and pilots. It may include research into the discovery of asana and its effects. It may include the application of yoga for the treatment of cancer and HIV. All these areas are part of applied yoga, and many cases can be helped effectively and efficiently if there is right application.

The wrong application of yoga practice can make a given condition worse, whereas the right application of yogic practices can transform a state of crisis into a state of

health and wellbeing. The application is not something that is specific, written down or sequential. It depends on the wisdom and intuition of the teacher, knowing the need of the student.

YOGA ECOLOGY

Once you apply yoga in your life, and it becomes part of your culture, then you begin to live according to the laws of nature. That is the principle of yoga ecology. You live a natural life. People say that living a natural life is ecology; however, living a natural life means living a life with respect for nature and the laws of God. If you can live such a life, you are living in the right manner. Today, ecology talks about preserving the earth and not destroying it, yet who is destroying the earth? People who are involved in maya. People who are detached from maya nourish the earth. They draw on the earth to fulfil their need, whereas people who are involved in maya use the earth to satisfy their greed. The earth has enough to supply everyone's need, but it cannot supply enough for even a single person's greed.

If you have dealt with your mind, then you have restrained your greed and you are aware of your need. When you become aware of your need, then you move into a different mindset that involves protectionism and not consumerism. From the perspective of yoga, when you become a protectionist in life, then you become a true ecologist. Consumerism is the drive to satisfy one's greed, and protectionism represents retaining only that which is required to fulfil your need.

In the older generation, when the family acquired a scooter, it was a prized possession. The entire family would ride that one scooter: the husband at the front, the wife sitting behind with a child in her lap and one little boy standing in front. Four people would be riding that scooter, and that was the prized possession for life. One would never even think of changing it. It would be used to the maximum, and that

is known as protectionism. Consumerism is using a thing, throwing it away, and buying another one to replace it.

In the mode of protectionism, you can manage everything properly, including water, earth and air. In the mode of consumerism, nothing can be managed properly. Consumerism is known as 'bhoga', and protectionism is known as 'yoga'. One who enjoys pleasures and likes to be equipped with all the items of luxury and comfort is a *bhogi*. One who lives in absolute bliss and peace with nothing and is more contented than the person who has everything, is a *yogi*. This is the vision of yoga: living in accordance with the laws of nature and the divine, and striving to overcome the limiting conditions of maya by making the effort to experience the creative nature, the expansive nature of the spirit.

These ideas are contained in the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali. Many people read the *Yoga Sutras*, yet do not see it as the philosophy of yoga. Instead, they see Rama, Krishna, Devi and Shiva as the philosophy of yoga. That is incorrect. Overcoming the limitations of the mind and experiencing the universal awareness is the aim of yoga. It is not a process of seeing the divine manifest in front of your eyes; it is a process of the unfolding and flowering of consciousness.

You have thought of yoga as a means to enlightenment, yet what kind of enlightenment can be sought when you do not know the effect of maya on your life? Most people do not know the effect of maya upon their life. You cannot find enlightenment with no foundation and no basis. Thus, if you make the effort to understand the sequence, the philosophy and the sadhana of yoga, it will have meaning and relevance for you in your life.

12

Manas Putra

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati was born on 14th February 1960 in Rajnandgaon (Chattisgarh). A month after his birth, Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati took Swami Niranjan in his lap, blessed him and said:

The light of God has descended in the form of this child to illuminate the darkest corners of this earth. He has been born through a pure, divine sankalpa. He has come to fulfil a grand purpose and mission. All of us owe him a debt of duty and responsibility. We have to prepare him for the great task he has come to undertake, a task that will involve countless other souls. He is an embodiment of divine light and he has come with the requisite ingredients. Water this young seedling . . . and in the course of time, this precious flower will spread its divine fragrance throughout the world.

Swami Niranjan's parents, Swami Dharmashakti and Swami Satyabratanaanda, were Sri Swamiji's first and closest disciples. They were childless and were inspired to ask Sri Swamiji for a child. On a trip to Gangotri, Sri Swamiji agreed and blessed them, but told them that the child would belong to him. Even before conception, Sri Swamiji had appointed Swami Niranjan as his successor. Thus, Swami Niranjan is the *manas putra*, mind-born son, of Sri Swamiji.

Born to be a sannyasin

By the age of three, Swami Niranjan had made up his mind that he wanted to be a sannyasin, in service of guru. He first visited the Munger ashram when he was four years old with a resolve to enter the path of sannyasa.

In 1967, Swami Niranjan formally withdrew from school to live with Sri Swamiji, much to the disappointment of his teachers, as he was a star student. Thus, at the age of seven, Swami Niranjan was brought to the ashram, and he lived there until 1971. Under the tutelage of Sri Swamiji, he received intense gurukul education and training. Those glorious days are indelibly sketched in Swami Niranjan's mind:

When we first came to our guru, we did not have any ambition to learn yoga or become yoga teachers. We did not have any ambition to travel and become gurus or a recognized person. Our intention was just to live near somebody whom we called our guru and who was the main attraction in our life. There were no expectations of the guru. It was not emotional dependency, but the force of his spiritual energy that drew us. It was the mumukshu attitude, although we did not know it at that time. We did not mind the hardship and the suffering because the ultimate purpose and goal of our life was there.

Swami Niranjan was educated in languages, scriptures, philosophy, art, ethics, sciences and contemporary subjects through yoga nidra. While he slept, Sri Swamiji taught him, to awaken the seed of knowledge within him. Of this experience, Swami Niranjan says:

Frankly speaking, I have no recollection of ever practising or learning through yoga nidra, as I used to be fast asleep. I was only seven or eight, but from what I have heard, Sri Swamiji taught me languages, scriptures, philosophies and sciences while I was asleep. I recollect reading books once only and having the feeling that I had read them before

somewhere, for example, the Bhagavad Gita. The first time a person handed me the Bhagavad Gita, I read it and felt as if I had already read it before. I knew what was written in it. I have been aware of that type of feeling many times. Even now when I read a book, which to my conscious mind is for the first time in my life, I know its contents. Sri Swamiji says that this was achieved by teaching me through sleep.

At the age of ten, on 11th January 1971, Swami Niranjana was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa by Sri Swamiji, and a new phase of training began for him.

Winning the world

On 1st March, 1971, Sri Swamiji left for Ireland with the eleven-year-old Swami Niranjana. He was left at the Belfast ashram where he remained with Swami Atmananda to assist in the development of the Satyananda Yoga Centre in Belfast and also to live and learn without the physical presence of Sri Swamiji. He also lived at Satyananda Yoga Ashram in Newcastle-on-Tyne with Rishis Arundhati and Vasishtha, furthering his cultural education. During this time, he travelled through Scotland, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany and Austria, conducting yoga classes and training courses.

After that, although they met several times at different destinations, including Munger, Swami Niranjana and Sri Swamiji never really lived together. Their contact, however, has been total. Swami Niranjana lived and moved thousands of miles away, yet his spirit of dedication remained with his guru at all times. He speaks of this enduring connection thus:

On a physical plane I am his servant, I obey him. On the inner plane he is my mentor, guide and companion. On the spiritual plane, he and I are one. That is my connection and relationship with him. There have been many, many

years of rich experience with Sri Swamiji which I am unable to put into words. Every moment of the time I spend with him is a moment of learning. This learning is not just intellectual; it is a learning which touches the deepest aspects of my being.

Swami Niranjan faced difficulties of every kind. Nevertheless, he did not compromise himself in the face of challenges and remained undaunted in his discipleship. In Ireland, he built bridges of tolerance between the Catholics and the Protestants, becoming an icon of neutrality between the two warring sides.

After spending time in Ireland, Swami Niranjan spent his childhood in London at the home of Swami Pragyamurti. There were many children around at that time who observed that Swami Niranjan exuded joy all the time, and anyone in his company always felt uplifted and experienced inner bliss.

In the articulate, intellectual, progressive and scientific environment of the western world, Swami Niranjan impressed all he associated with through the maturity of his knowledge and insight into the needs and problems of people. At the age of eleven, Swami Niranjan was giving discourses and teaching yoga techniques such as hatha yoga and raja yoga, and sadhanas such as prana vidya, often to people more than thrice his age.

In 1972, at the age of twelve, Swami Niranjan had his first encounter with the medical fraternity in London. The day before the lecture he found himself wondering what he would say. That night he dreamt of giving the lecture. On waking, he noted down all the points. After the lecture, the doctors were surprised to hear that he had never completed formal school education. He had spoken to them about biofeedback, a newly-emerging subject, which even many medics did not know of. He attributed this knowledge to the input given to his subconscious mind in yoga nidra by his guru:

When I first came to the ashram in Munger, I was a very difficult child. Sri Swamiji tried to teach me by making me sit in front of him, but the moment he looked the other way I would be miles away. That education did not work and so he tried yoga nidra. When I was asleep, he would play cassettes and give me instructions. Today I realize that the information I received while asleep has guided me and formed my personality. It has given me insight into many things about myself which otherwise I would not have had.

On 11th January, 1973, Swami Niranjan travelled from England to Bogota in Colombia, South America, and extensively toured Colombia and Ecuador. Then he returned to India with a delegation of South American yoga aspirants to participate in the Golden Jubilee Celebrations and the World Yoga Convention being held in Munger.

He now travelled with Sri Swamiji to participate in yoga conventions throughout India. In July 1974 he returned to Colombia and travelled extensively through El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador and Chile, conducting yoga training programs and establishing yoga teaching centres. During this period he also researched the existence of yoga systems, practices and theories in the pre-Columbian culture of South America, gathering pictorial, sculpted and documented evidence. This work was motivated by his desire to bring the cultures of the world together through shared spiritual ideals.

In 1976, en route to Australia, Swami Niranjan conducted yoga programs in Chile and French Polynesia. He then participated in the World Yoga Convention in Sydney with Sri Swamiji in 1976. He remained in Australia and carried out research on pranayama in Sydney, and on music and mantra in Queensland. He assisted in the formation of ashrams throughout Australia including Sydney, Brisbane and Canberra. He also travelled to New Zealand to guide yoga programs.

Returning to India in July 1977, he became the editor of the monthly magazine *Yoga Vidya* and worked as Sri Swamiji's secretary. He also lived and worked to develop the Satyananda Yoga Ashram in Kolkata and conducted extensive yoga programs within India.

In 1979, Swami Niranjana travelled to Europe where he conducted yoga programs in Greece, Switzerland, England, Ireland and Italy, and assisted in establishing yoga centres in Spain.

Travelling to the US on 1st March 1980, Swami Niranjana conducted two whirlwind tours, visiting, teaching, training, guiding and lecturing yoga aspirants in all the major cities: New York, New Jersey, Virginia, Washington DC, Michigan, Illinois, Georgia, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada and California. Subsequently, Satyananda Yoga Ashram USA was formed in October 1980. Residential ashrams and teaching centres were established in key locations including New York City, Salt Lake City, Berkeley and San Jose, among others.

During this period, Swami Niranjana interacted, worked and lived with eminent scientists, spiritual masters, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian groups and heads of different organizations. He conducted research on drug addiction and relaxation response at Gladman Memorial Centre, and on meditation with Dr Joe Kamiya, Nobel Laureate in alpha research. At this time he also acquired skills in audiovisual technologies and flying a Cessna plane.

Thus, for twelve years Swami Niranjana lived and travelled overseas, mastering skills in varied areas, acquiring an understanding of different cultures and helping establish Satyananda Yoga ashrams and centres in Europe, Australia, North and South America, and New Zealand. During this time, he taught and spread the message of yoga to people from all walks of life. It was during this period, surrounded by the glitz and glamour of the West, that he decided to further strengthen his resolve to live the life of dedication, commitment, upliftment and

responsibility as a sannyasin. He attributes the process of attaining this clarity to his guru:

When Sri Swamiji took me to the West, he said, “I have given you sannyasa, but I will not hold you to it. You are free to choose your own path and create your destiny. If you want to marry, you have my permission. If you want to enter a profession, you have my permission. If you want to remain a sannyasin, you have my blessings.” When he said that, I started looking at the pros and cons of everything. I had many foster parents, too, around the world, who gave me the opportunity to grow freely, without imposing ideas of morality on me. Ultimately I decided sannyasa was my path.

By 1982, the yoga movement started by Sri Swamiji was flourishing and spiritual seekers were flocking to the remote town of Munger. In accordance with the wishes of Sri Swamiji, Swami Niranjan returned to Munger on 16th January 1983 and a few days later, on 19th January, the day of Basant Panchami and the foundation day of Bihar School of Yoga (BSY), Sri Swamiji appointed him president of BSY and handed over full charge and responsibility to him, including the activities of Sivananda Math and the Yoga Research Foundation.

Leading light

Swami Niranjan served as president of BSY for twenty-five years, from 1983 up to 2008. In that time he took the yoga movement and the establishment at Ganga Darshan, Munger, to new heights. During his term, Swami Niranjan was actively involved in lecturing, teaching, travelling and administering the establishment at Munger and the ever-increasing centres throughout the world. He took yoga to different sectors of society, uncovered more scriptural sciences and started new movements.

Under Swami Niranjan’s guidance, BSY made significant advances in the application of yoga to address the needs of various groups of people in society including professionals,

medics, sportsmen, prison inmates, army, school children, people with cancer, special needs, and people with addictions.

Since the 1990s, BSY has undertaken various projects for professional groups in the state of Bihar, delivering stress management and self-development courses to groups such as income tax officers, central excise, customs and service tax officers, Government of India staff, the Office of Ministerial Staff Training unit and employees of the Indian Railways.

At the request of the Sports Authority of India (SAI), BSY began conducting both short- and long-term training programs for athletes, coaches, physical training teachers, SAI unit heads, coaches and administrative officers. These programs included preparation for the Commonwealth Games in archery and gymnastics, judo, boxing and volleyball teams, and the world cadet wrestling championship medal winner.

A major project of teaching yoga in all medical colleges in the state of Bihar was undertaken at the request of the Bihar Ministry of Health. The Bihar Government sanctioned teaching of yoga therapy to 16,000 registered medical students and doctors.

Since 1994, yoga training has been imparted in twenty-four prisons in Bihar to thousands of prisoners in Bihar jails, hundreds of which have also been trained as yoga teachers.

The Indian Army has introduced yoga into their training programs, for both physical fitness and mental health, especially in high altitude and desert areas. Courses have been conducted for the soldiers, officers and troops at a number of locations. Training programs are also provided for trainees, instructors, inspectors and officers from a number of police academies throughout India.

In 1995, under the guidance of Swami Niranjan, sannyasins on *pad yatra*, walking pilgrimage, took yoga to 108 remote villages of Bihar. The sannyasins engaged in various activities, from clearing roads and drains to teaching

yoga, conducting satsang and kirtans. Due to the positive influence of yoga in several villages in the most crime-infested areas of Bihar, hundreds of people resolved to leave the life of crime. His deep insight into the needs of society has ensured that the goal of yoga can be met in terms of practical, real life needs:

The immediate need of human civilization is not the awakening of kundalini. Before we can understand the concept of kundalini, we need to cover a lot of ground. Kundalini represents the universal application of yogic wisdom. However, integrating the practices into society represents the primary and secondary systems of education. The time has now come where we need to understand yoga in its totality, as it is applicable for the improvement and development of the human personality.

Combining philosophical, scriptural and empirical experience, Swami Niranjan's insight into the benefits of yoga for children has been accepted worldwide. In 1994 and again in March 2000, Swami Niranjan was the Guest Speaker at international conferences organized by UNESCO in France. His exposition on the role and benefits of yoga for children and possibilities for the integration of yoga into classical education was highly acclaimed and generated a new approach to education in Europe.

For people suffering with drug addictions, research and investigations undertaken in Greece, Italy and Czechoslovakia under the direction of Swami Niranjan, have conclusively shown that yoga can dynamically improve the ability of people to make positive qualitative changes in their lifestyle and move beyond the grip of obsessive desire.

On 31st December 1989, Swami Niranjan was initiated as a paramahansa sannyasin by his guru, Swami Satyananda. The symbol of the paramahansa is the graceful swan. Long before this initiation, people the world over started to call him 'Swan', due to the qualities of grace

and balance which he embodied. In 1993, Swami Niranjana was anointed spiritual successor to Swami Satyananda by the luminaries of the sannyasa tradition. In 1995, at the first Sat Chandi Maha Yajna, Sri Swamiji passed on his spiritual shakti and sannyasa sankalpa to Swami Niranjana and declared him the guru and paramacharya of the tradition. He took on his role with the certainty of one who has fully embraced his dharma:

I feel I have come into this life to help others find their place in life, to help others who are suffering physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. If I can help one person to be happy and healthy, I will die happily. If God gives me the opportunity and asks me, "What do you want to do?" I will say, "Let me take birth again so I can help many more people." I do not want enlightenment; enlightenment is for the weak. I want to struggle to make others free. That is my sankalpa, and I wish to share this sankalpa with all those who are involved with yoga. This is the inspiration I have received from yoga.

Expanding the horizons

A rare combination of inherent wisdom, insight and incisive genius, the depth of Swami Niranjana's contributions to the understanding of yoga is remarkable. His exposition of *dharana*, the sixth stage in the raja yoga of Sage Patanjali, is unparalleled. Combining scriptural and personal experiential research, Swami Niranjana expounded upon a collection of *dharana* practices from ancient yogic, tantric and upanishadic texts. Published in 1993, his book *Dharana Darshan* systematized these practices and made them accessible.

His interest in scriptural research inspired Swami Niranjana to reveal the unknown practice of *laya* yoga derived from vedic thought and tradition. A highly advanced practice, *laya* deals with the dissolution of the manifest nature and experience into the unmanifest, and is seldom

taught. Thus, he worked to expand the reach of yoga research into the undiscovered realms of the mind:

In the next stage of evolution we will be searching for ways to harmonize and integrate the faculties of the mind. Evolution is a constant process of discovery. We have tried to search in the tradition and literature of yoga for ideas and techniques which will be relevant for the coming generations. Ideas which will be relevant for the next two decades have been discovered, and techniques which will be useful for the fulfilment of the requirements of the future generations have also been pinpointed.

Bihar Yoga Bharati, an institute for advanced studies in Yogic Sciences, was established in Munger 1994 by Swami Niranjan to preserve and regenerate the yogic sciences by integrating science and spirituality. The gurukul-based institute is the first of its kind in the world wholly devoted to the subject of yoga, offering a comprehensive scientific and yogic education and provision to grant certificates and diplomas in yogic studies. Satellite academies in Australia, Europe, the US and South America continue to bring the teachings of BYB to aspirants worldwide. He has a clear vision for BYB:

I have made the attempt to bring yoga to the academic level by encouraging higher studies in yogic traditions. I established the first yoga university in the world known as the Bihar Yoga Bharati, which is recognized by the Government of India. This university is devoted to the development of yoga as a science and to the ancient traditions of yoga, spiritual life and mysticism, not only in India and the East, but also in the West, to see what links the ancient cultures had with the yogic tradition.

In 1995, Swami Niranjan initiated the children's yoga movement, Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal (BYMM), under which the children of Munger and surrounding areas imbibe the yogic culture. Started with just seven children, today it has

grown to include over 1,20,000 children devoted to yoga. By introducing yoga during early childhood Swami Niranjan has given the children the opportunity to grow into healthy, happy adults:

The IQ or intelligence quotient is related to the intellect. The EQ or emotional quotient is related to the heart. There is also the SQ or social quotient. These are the three components of personality: intelligence, emotions and interactions, or head, heart and hands. The aim of the Children's Yoga Fellowship is to integrate all three aspects. Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal is a movement in which children are taking responsibility for their lives, for their education, for their attitudes, and for their behaviour.

In 2000, Swami Niranjan established the Yoga Publications Trust (YPT) to disseminate and promote yogic and spiritual knowledge, lifestyle and practice, nationally and internationally through the publication and distribution of text books, magazines, research materials, practice texts, audio and video cassettes and multimedia presentations.

For the period of Swami Niranjan's leadership, BSY ensured the continuity of both the ancient yogic culture and the tradition of sannyasa. In addition to steering the activities at Munger, Swami Niranjan travelled extensively to guide seekers around the globe. His fresh approach and innate humanity inspired countless aspirants around the globe to take up not only yoga practice, but a yogic lifestyle and yogic culture.

New phase

In 2008, he handed over the presidency of BSY to the third generation, led by Swami Suryaprakash. In 2009, before attaining mahasamadhi, Sri Swamiji gave Swami Niranjan the command to embark on a new phase of sannyasa life, discontinue travel, focus on sadhana, base himself in Munger, and develop a new chapter. This new vision manifested in the form of Sannyasa Peeth:

For forty years, under the guidance, inspiration and instruction of my guru, Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati, I successfully and efficiently maintained a pace in propagating yoga throughout the world. It was a small contribution to the great mission of my guru. In July 2009, Sri Swamiji called me and said, "Now you have to embark upon another journey and in order to so, one chapter of your life has to close." That was the public life in which I was interacting with people and society, and propagating yoga at a global level. In the new chapter I have to rediscover the aim and purpose of my life for which I have taken sannyasa. Sri Swamiji said, "The life of karma is over for you and now begin the life of dharma."

On 6th December 2010, the auspicious one-year anniversary date of the mahasamadhi of Sri Swamiji, Sannyasa Peeth was formally established by Swami Niranjana at Paduka Darshan, by the banks of the sacred river Ganga in Munger, with the aim of reintegrating the ancient vedic spiritual heritage and culture into the fabric of modern society. In his introduction to the training participants he made it clear that this endeavour was an extension of his own spiritual development:

In this sannyasa training we shall be offering ourselves to the parampara of Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda. I am not conducting this training as a teacher, but I am taking it as a part of my own sadhana to cultivate and deepen my sannyasa life.

As the first major project towards implementing the vision of Sannyasa Peeth, Swami Niranjana inaugurated a three-year sannyasa training on Basant Panchami, 28th January 2012, in Munger. To fulfil the mandates given by Sri Swamiji, in 2010 he initiated the Yogadrishti (Yogavision) Satsang Series in which virtually every month a new topic of yoga and spiritual life is expounded upon. Under Swami Niranjana's keen sight, Sannyasa Peeth hosted the first

Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna from 8 to 12 September, 2011, and since then, the event is being held annually at Sannyasa Peeth.

As part of the new phase of his sannyasa life, Swami Niranjan has also undertaken a number of pilgrimages, in particular to those places which Sri Swamiji had visited. In conjunction with the Bihar School of Yoga, Swami Niranjan launches a World Yoga Convention in October 2013. The event marks the next yogic and spiritual revolution, awakening a deeper insight and understanding of the ancient yogic science. In Swami Niranjan's words:

We shall celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga and at that time the third World Yoga Convention will also take place in Munger. Entirely new definitions, concepts and practices of yoga will be presented to the public. That will be my offering to the Bihar School of Yoga before I immerse myself in the Sannyasa Peeth activities.

Having handed over the reins of BSY and successfully continued the mandate of spreading 'yoga from shore to shore', Swami Niranjan now moves towards perfecting and living the sannyasa life and tradition, and to fulfil the mandate given to him by his guru.



Manas putra, 1960



Bihar School of Yoga, 1960s



United Kingdom, 1971



Bogota, Colombia, 1975



USA, 1980



Munger, 1983



Manas putra, 2009



In the footsteps of guru, 2012



During 2013, the Golden Jubilee Year of Bihar School of Yoga, many keen aspirants and seekers asked three questions: “What is the story behind Bihar School of Yoga?” “What was Swami Satyananda’s vision of yoga?” and “What is yoga?” This book seeks to answer these questions.

Bihar School of Yoga: The Vision of a Sage tells the story of Swami Satyananda Saraswati’s life as a spiritual seeker, his learning, toil and effort while tirelessly serving his guru, Swami Sivananda, for twelve years, and the ensuing years of fulfilling his guru’s mandate ‘to spread yoga from door to door and shore to shore’. The development of Bihar School of Yoga, the dedication behind it and the global propagation and revival of yoga in the modern era, including the journey of Swami Niranjanananda, Sri Swamiji’s successor, are described.

Sri Swamiji’s far-reaching vision of yoga for the spiritual evolution of humanity is told through narrations and satsangs: the story of his life tells how a yogic dream was formed and manifested. Due to Sri Swamiji’s aspirations to fulfil his guru’s mandate, humanity has been given a vidya, a path of learning, so expansive, profound and complete, that it seems it can never be surpassed. In so doing, he established himself as the foremost inspirer of yoga in this era, leaving footprints that millions continue to follow.



BAR CODE HERE

ISBN: 978-93-81620-97-7